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THE
ORPHAN BOY;

OR,

Lights and Shadows of Northern Life.

BY JEREMY LOUD,

AUTHOR OF "DOVECOTE."



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Prefatory.

I CONFESS I never could understand why a Preface need always be an Apology. If a man has written a book, and fairly put his heart into what he has done, it is not so easy to tell what there is for him to be ashamed of.

A Preface certainly should not be a whine. It may be made a vehicle for either this, that, or the other-sort of sentiment respecting the book, bespeaking for it nothing more than fair play in its proper turn ; or it may be the *avant courrier*—the clear-the-way guard (in the case of a Novel) to the main body of personages just ready to come up :—but whatever it is, there is no use in crying about it. For my own part, while I have no such design as that of hawking my own literary wares through the world, neither will I consent to beg a well-disposed Public to wink at what they honestly want to condemn.

Therefore the less said about the contents of these two covers, the better. My readers will be likely to say all that is necessary in the matter, and say it a

great deal better than I can. The story in the main is a simple one, rehearsing the interwoven histories of a round of every-day characters in town and country. I have thought but to describe the passions and pleasures, the trials and triumphs of common life, trenching in no part upon ground that properly belongs to the domains of romance, and seeking to balance all drafts on the imagination against the actual experiences of existence.

If there should be a passage or a page, here and there, by whose silent means the heart of the reader may be drawn to the heart of the author, the book will have served the first and highest purpose for which it was written. If there is any thing in life in which the author implicitly believes, it is the magnetism of Love. The intellect is regal, because forever tossed by the waves of a restless ambition ; but the soul of man is far greater, because it expands only as it aspires. The secret sympathy of a single human heart, therefore, is better than the echoed applause of a thousand minds, even if they all sat at the very top of literary judgment.

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GABRIEL VANE.

CHAPTER I.

A PAUPER'S FUNERAL.

Snow—snow—snow, and the dreary night falling.

For hours the flakes had kept coming—finer, faster, thicker. Now they fell so swiftly your eyes were dazzled trying to follow them down. The landscape was wrapping around itself a great white shroud with many folds. It was just such weather as you might expect—though it is not always to be had—in mid December. The scene was a country scene; a dead, drear landscape; hills and woods fading away in the misty maze of the snow; houses looking in the distance like mere humps on the back of the world, each moment getting dimmer and dimmer; roads closing up to the eye as if by the storm they were made as impassable as by gates; and overhead the heavens darkening till the gloom promised to be complete and profound.

It was dismal enough in town, where the few travelers staggered against one another in the streets; but in the open country, without the protection of high houses on either side, or the half-cheery companionship of lanterns that tried to wink through the blinding storm, it was dis-

mal indeed. There was nothing to cheat your senses of the dull reality in the country. Your imagination could create no walls to narrow down the width of the picture, nor light rows of lamps to break ever so feebly the monotony of the gloom.

There stood an old poor-house on a bleak country cross-road that appeared to take a real pride—if poor-houses may be supposed to be proud—in its environments of desolation. Unlike some who manage to wear the livery of a good character got under false pretenses, this edifice rather seemed to wear its garments and name with an air of undeniable satisfaction. Being a poor-house—only a wretched country poor-house—it would wish to appear nothing more nor less than itself. So the yard that stretched from the front-door to the end of the lane was strewn about with logs, chips, fragments of vehicles of various sorts, broken cart-wheels, and a grind-stone without a crank. And a tumble-down shed hard by vainly pretended to keep the storm out of the seat of the best and only wagon its proprietor had to ride over to the village in. And the stone walls gaped widely opposite the house, as if they might possibly be sleepy, and that there might be no trouble about the cows getting into the fields in summer.

The dwelling itself was very brown and very dingy; oblivious of any coat the painter might have thrown over its shoulders in earlier days. The windows were remarkably diminutive, and without either curtains or shutters. A single stone chimney rose like a turret from the middle of the sharp ridge-pole, stained and dirty with the smokes of full forty years. The door was low, and just over it was set a row of thick glass windows to serve as lights for the entry. No description could exactly carry the building, with all its many uninviting accompaniments, and set it down before the reader's imagination. To be

perfectly and properly estimated, inwardly as well as outwardly, it must needs have been made the subject of individual reconnoissance.

At one of the diminutive front windows was standing the slight figure of a little boy, who was occupied with looking out thoughtfully on the dreary scenery and the falling snow. He was an object that challenged at the same time one's attention and compassion. His face was extremely pale, and his eyes were red and swollen with much weeping. A capacious and open forehead, over whose temples were carelessly strewn the auburn locks he now had no one to keep arranged for him, spoke of a quick and abundant intellect; while the whole expression that sat on his youthful countenance was that of the most abject sadness.

Standing thus apart at the window, in the common room where several others were gathered—silent, saddened, and thoughtful—his very tenderness of years exciting a quick and subtle sympathy with the beholder, he offered such a picture as every dreary country poor-house is not able to produce. The others in the room—men and women—kept throwing glances at him as if he must be uppermost in their thoughts; and more than one of the old creatures drew real and honest sighs in looking forward to the future that stretched away at his feet.

"Poor boy!" said one of the men sitting near the stove, in a tone he might have meant for a whisper; "he takes it hardly enough, don't he?"

"Ah! but there be few at his age," was the reply, "that know, as he does, what 'tis to lose a mother! It's a great loss; a very great loss, you see."

"And he always loved her so much! Leastways, he always seemed to."

"Yes, and she him jest as much, too."

The men both turned their faces and surveyed him again, soberly.

"The poor little feller! I wish I was able to do some-
thin' for him; I really do. If some real good rich man
would come along, now!"

"Ah, but don't be too sure. Your rich men ain't always your best men. They don't make a p'int o' lovin' the downright poor any too much. Oh, no; they seem to think their money has put 'em forever out o' the reach of poverty, and all they mean to do is jest to look out and keep it at a safe distance. So poor folks have to crowd back; and they do crowd, and dreadful close too, sometimes, I can tell ye! It's really astonishin' how little feeling there is in the world, arter all 's said and done."

The boy still kept his position at the window. The room was not yet lighted, and only the few unsteady gleams of the flame that played through the chinks of the stove door were allowed to throw their glimmering radiance over the apartment. Now and then they sufficed to light up quite grotesquely, and but for a passing moment, the different figures that were drawn in a huddled circle around the stove; but that was all.

The snow was falling fast. It was covering every thing. It was weaving the winding-sheet for the new grave of the boy's dead mother!

His thoughts were busy with the subject. His eyes mechanically tried to follow some of the flakes, and watched them as they were silently matted into the pearly mass that enveloped the ground; and his feelings brooded sadly in the grave he had that afternoon seen closed.

It was an unhappy scene even for so unhappy a spot as the poor-house of Epping. It was a funeral. Every where funerals are impressive, but especially so in the

deep quiet of the country, and in the almost unbroken solitudes of winter. The shivering regiment of the town's poor in Epping had on that same afternoon voluntarily marshaled itself into a double line, and, with a depth of sympathy that even raggedness and cold can not freeze in every human heart, paid unitedly its last sorrowful respects to the memory of the dead. It was a melancholy sight—this thin procession of paupers, and challenged the compassion of all who beheld it.

At the head of the line walked the village minister, holding the little orphan's hand. One of the Selectmen of the town was likewise present, who had arrived for the purpose of keeping matters as orderly as possible. And Mr. Hardcastle, the keeper of the poor, himself was no wise behindhand in lending his supervisory assistance on the mournful occasion; albeit Mrs. Hardcastle felt herself assured that she had more important work to do, than following a friendless and unknown pauper to her grave.

"For," said she with herself, "who is there that knows any thing about this woman? The Selectmen sent her here to be taken care of; she has been taken care of. And now that she's finally dead and gone, she'll be put out of the way altogether, where she'll be no further trouble to nobody. Is there any body, now, that knows who she was? or where she came from? or any thing at all about her? And to cap the whole, she must needs put on such very pretty airs, and try to make it appear as if she had been once such a very great lady, and so very feminine, and quite above work, and eternally complaining of her health—and all such things as that! Why, if she had friends, why didn't she call on 'em, and not lay and die in a poor-house? At all events, why didn't she once tell where they be? We might have been put in the way then of helping her some. As it was, she

kept every thing to herself, as close as could be ; and I'm sure I don't know how she'd expect others to go to work for themselves and find out her secret ! I don't believe there ever was any secret ; I believe she never was any thing more than just what she was when she died !”

Thus soliloquized Mrs. Hardcastle ; and Mrs. Hardcastle, as a general thing, did the thinking for both herself and her nominal lord. In the matter of action, he was conceded to stand rather foremost. Yet, in fact, he never dared to push forward save on the smooth track of the plans she had previously prepared for him.

While the boy, whose name was Gabriel, was yet standing before the darkened window, as I have already described, one of the two men who had employed the foregoing expressions of pity toward him, stepped slowly over to where he was, and took hold gently of his shoulder.

“Gabriel !” said he, in a low and husky tone.

The boy looked up ; but he did so with such moderation and self-possession, that the man partially started before the mild expression of his eye, and for a moment hesitated. As soon as Gabriel saw who the speaker was, he instantly threw his eyes out the window again.

“Why don't you set by the stove, Gabriel ?” asked the man, still in a low tone. “You must be cold here.”

“I'd rather stand here and look out the window,” was the answer.

“You must be lonesome,” said the man. “Come and set down by me awhile. Come,” and he pulled gently at the boy's arm.

“I like to stay here by myself, and watch the snow, I can't sit by the stove. I want to think about my mother.”

The reply dimmed the eyes of old Nathan Grubb with tears.

"I will be your friend, Gabriel," said he. "I will take the place of your mother for you. Come, come with me, and set up to the fire. You must n't think of these things too much; they ain't good for you; they'll hurt your mind."

"Will it do me any hurt to think of my dear mother, Mr. Grubb?" inquired the boy, with great innocence.

"No; but you must n't let your thoughts run to melancholy too much. That's all. You're young yet, you know. You'll get over it all sometime, perhaps. Come; don't stay off here alone so!"

"Shall I ever forget my mother, Mr. Grubb, do you think?" returned Gabriel, turning over the words of his consoler. "Have you forgotten all about your mother, Mr. Grubb?"

"No, no, bless your innocent soul! No, no; my dear little lad! Not at all, I thank God most devoutly! Not at all have I! She's in my heart here, every day I live; and she's in my dreams at night, too, pretty often. But I never allowed myself to think of nothing else; if I had, I should n't know how to do what it's so necessary I must do. Ah, no, poor boy! Never forget your own mother, as long as you live. A man never has but one mother in this world. Always be true to her memory, and you can't well help bein' happy all the way through the world, let you be as poor as you may. Just remember that, will you? and remember old Nathan Grubb too, of the Epping Poor-house, every time you think of it. Come now, won't ye, and set up by the fire with me. You're lonesome here, I know. I want to cheer ye up a little. Come; it's too cold out here."

Still the boy kept his attention riveted on the dreary scene without doors. He made no answer, wrapped, to appearance, in the sombre drapery of his feelings.

Old Nathan stooped down to whisper in his ear, and so brought his own face in close contact with the little sufferer's.

Down the boy's cheeks the great tears were rolling, while his little chest heaved convulsively with the sobs it had not the power to stifle.

Old Nathan started. His heart was touched deeply. And as he turned sorrowfully away, he said, half aloud as he went,

"Poor little feller! Come, come and set with me!"

A shriveled and sputtering candle was not long after brought in, that made the dreary room look drearier than ever. Gabriel could not once be seduced from the position he had chosen; and not until Mr. Harcastle himself finally came and told him it was time for him to go to bed, did he offer to move from the spot.

In the dark—as they always did—he found his way to his little bed up stairs, and hastily crawled in. As he threw his head upon the pillow, tears rained from his eyes, and wet his cheeks.

"Oh, my mother!" exclaimed he, in a moaning voice; "if I could see you once more! Oh mother! mother!"

Had he dared, he would certainly have called on her aloud. His heart was so cruelly torn with the thorns, that he felt that to cry out would be a sure relief. This way and that he turned, crying, sobbing, whispering over and over again words of anguish and distress; and he stared about him fitfully in the gloom of his cribbed little room, as if it were possible that the figure of his dead parent might appear in the darkness, and once more salute him with her old kiss of affection.

And between sobbing and watching, weeping and wishing, more in a dream than in a waking state, hardly knowing who or where he was, the orphan fell finally asleep. In dreams, at least, there might be happiness for him. In dreams he might be permitted to behold his mother again.

CHAPTER II.

A CHASE AROUND THE CHIMNEY.

GABRIEL awoke as soon as morning dawned, and tried to recall his exact situation and properly connect the strange circumstances that surrounded him. The first thought that came filled his whole mind. "I have lost my mother!" His heart sunk, and he felt as if in that one instant he were being drawn down to the lowest deep of despair.

His eyes wandered over the unfinished and unfurnished room, from the floor to the rude rafters, among the dark beams and cross-beams, and in the gloomy shadows of the angles. Every thing looked so dismal! Every object spoke so loudly of desolation! What was there to life that he should desire to see any more of it? How soon had the light gone out for him, smothered with the folds of a great and lasting trouble!

Through the day, cold and unwelcome as it was, he did nothing but sit silently by himself, or loiter alone with an exceedingly sad countenance from one room to another. The snow had piled itself high every where out of doors, and only a single path had been made to the wood-pile, the well, and so on to the barn. He sat by the window the greater part of the forenoon looking out upon the spectacle. The sun had not risen clear, and the sky still continued sullen and gloomy. The air seemed

not yet to have quite sifted down the whole of its feathery freight. And all things out of doors conspired to increase the boy's despondency.

He would, at times, so far escape from the consciousness of his real situation as to lose himself for a moment in his admiration of the fantastic freaks performed by the snow over night; studying its queer devices upon posts and rails, roofs and walls; taken up with the various images and pictures that crowded themselves so rapidly into his mind; and essaying to make out faces and figures on the trees, on the barn roof, about the old shed, and the well-curb:—and instantaneously the dread shadow of that terrible recollection—"I have lost my mother!"—would swing over his heart, and his brain reeled and swam with the power of the sudden shock it gave him.

The men and women belonging about the house could do but a trifle on such a day in the way of out-door work: so they drew themselves in a sober circle around the stove that stood in the middle of the floor, and occupied themselves with sage comments on the character and extent of the storm, the length of time before the roads would get "broke out," and the prospects of sunshine for some time in the future. The most of them leaned their elbows forward upon their knees, getting in as near proximity to the stove as they could; and whenever one and another of them moved much, the old ash-bottomed chairs creaked with a sound that seemed to have been created for a country poor-house, and for just nothing else.

A few indulged in their old habit of smoking, drawing at their dingy pipes as if they could yield them sustenance itself, and crunching the pipe-stems between their teeth while they essayed to add to the conversation. The floor was entirely bare, and about the stove was wet

with the melted snow that had been stamped off from one and another's boots. There had long been great need of a cleaning at the windows, and the need made itself still more manifest as the dinginess was now set off so clearly against the spotless ground of snow.

The men turned now and then, some of them, to look at little Gabriel, who carefully kept his back toward them, and occasionally they had something sorrowful to say in a loud whisper with each other; which was generally accompanied with a shake of the head, and a lengthening expression of countenance. Two or three women—poor, worn-down creatures—helped fill up the circle of paupers around the stove. They were attired in the most meager style, and their faces looked dried and shriveled. They, too, bent their eyes on Gabriel, though they said nothing of him as yet among themselves. Their sympathy for him was quick—far more so than that of the others could have been.

As the smoke from their pipes began by degrees to fill the room, the orphan was seized with a fit of coughing; and at last, stealing out unseen through the door, he found his way upstairs to his sleeping apartment.

The sight of the little bed instantly stirred afresh the grief that had all the time been waiting to break its bounds and overflow. When he looked at it, deserted and empty, and when he thought, too, how tenderly his own mother had always watched for him at his bedside, coming to look at him often before he arose in the morning—he could not control himself any longer, but fell involuntarily on his knees and buried his face in his hands.

Something like a prayer—it was a true and hearty child's prayer—escaped his lips, in a voice that was but a deep moan. "Oh, my mother! my mother!" could be heard in the midst of convulsive sobbings and sighings

all over the room. Every thing his mother had told him, every word she had spoken, all her blessed expressions of affection, all her looks of love came freshly to him now. He saw her dear face again. He caught the glimpse of that same sweet—sweet smile. Before his very eyes danced her image, holding out to him its open arms. He yearned to throw himself into these arms. He longed to lay his head once more upon that bosom, and there forget his destroying griefs. And then as the image suddenly disappeared from his vision, and the sweet smile faded slowly from her face, and her opened arms were lost in the vapory mists that seemed to receive and enshroud her—the dark shadow sailed over his soul darker than ever, and the very air of the apartment grew oppressive to his lungs.

“Oh, my mother! my dear mother!”

Could cry of any other syllables so move the hearts of those who might be listeners?

When the full power of his grief was in some degree spent, and exhausted nature doggedly refused to go further with its poignant suffering, he leaned his head against the edge of the bed, and, still sitting on the naked floor, seemed slowly lapsing into a gentle slumber. Cold as it was he felt that he could have fallen asleep in that place as well as any other. And now the light from the single little window grew dimmer and dimmer, fading slowly on his sight, and opening to his drowsy senses a vista in which he saw the strangest objects mixed inextricably in the strangest confusion. Faces such as he never could have beheld any where in his short lifetime before, now came crowding and flying past each other through the window, dancing along toward him on the pale rays of the light; and heaps of outstretched hands seemed extended to him from all directions, as if they

would bring him help in his trouble, or were beckoning him away from that scene of sorrow and distress, or would clutch at him to save him from the weary life and the saddened death of the pauper.

These images mixed themselves up grotesquely with his dreaminess, peopling thickly the land of visions to which he was fast going. Some of the matter seemed a reality; and some of it was so dim and distant he could not make beginning or end out of it at all. And among the beams and rafters, and away in the darkened angles did these phantoms go; some of the faces looking as dull as they anywise could, grinning and chattering at him; and some of the figures playing fantastic tricks, and making most ridiculous leaps and swings all about the walls and ceiling.

His eyelids grew heavy. His eyes almost shut—then opened themselves wide—then quite shut together; and he was at last in the realms of slumber. And out of all those strange and droll faces was looking forth now only a single face—that well-known face of his mother; and the smiles were beginning to beam again on him, and the eyes to sparkle with the old-time affection.

Suddenly a loud, sharp cry rang in his ears; and immediately following it was to be heard a wild medley of sounds that might have been human, but seemed little less than unearthly. His eyes opened, and he raised his head to look about the room.

Instantly the cries were repeated, making an indescribable combination of noises that were enough to chill one's blood with horror.

He rose to his feet, and walked cautiously toward the window; then it suddenly occurred to him whence these hideous outcries came; and, obeying the curiosity that

took instant possession of him, he went out of the room and up into the garret.

In a distant corner of the dismal and darkened old garret had been made a kind of cage or pen, much after the style of a coop for wild animals, in which was at this time confined a human being. As Gabriel reached the top of the stairs he stopped and listened. Dim as the light of the attic was it was yet sufficient to disclose to his straining gaze a pair of fierce and burning eyes that peered through the bars of that wooden cage; and a row of huge white teeth, that gnashed between lips all parched and livid; and a human head, with hair crazily tossed and tangled upon its wrinkled temples. He had heard those noises before, and might perhaps have known that there was some deep mystery in them. He must have hitherto suspected that the dreary attic was put to uses of which he had not been very minutely advised; and he remembered that sundry expressions from the older ones in the house, dropped in cautious tones, had often fallen within his quick hearing.

Going straight to the great chimney, he crouched in its shadow, peering from around the corner at the creature thus kept in confinement. He felt a creeping sensation come over his flesh as the sounds continued; yet he could not stir, for a feeling that was strangely compounded of fear and inquisitiveness. He was riveted to the spot.

With howls such as a child could never before have heard, and a quick succession immediately after of a series of the most unearthly and terrific guttural sounds imaginable, the maniac continued alternately to beat together the palms of his hands, pluck fiercely at the locks of his hair, that for a longer time than usual had escaped shearing at the hands of Mr. Hardecastle, and pull and tug with all his excited strength at the bars of his most unwelcome

prison. His great gray eyes flashed like coals of fire. He raved and cursed impiously. He stamped his naked feet upon the floor as if he would tear every board through.

Perhaps he was cold. What of that? He was a crazy man; and such needed not to be warm. They must only be kept from harming those whom God had made more sane than they. Possibly the frost had taken hold of his feet. But better so, said his friends and keepers, if by the means be brought no untimely frost upon their own individual happiness. A poor, pitiful, wretched outcast! cooped and caged in the darkest corner of the dark garret of the old poor-house! when out of hearing, utterly forgotten by those of his kin; and when accidentally within reach of their ears, flung off hastily from their compassion with a light and random expression, perhaps more than half of contempt!

He espied Gabriel at length, whose curiosity or intense sympathy had led him to expose himself round the corner of the chimney; and calling out to him with a variety of sounds, that could be said to express hardly more than the idiotic noises in the throat of a deaf and dumb man, he again shook the bars of his cage as if nothing could prevent his coming through.

The boy now walked forward a step or two. In this novel and startling spectacle he had for the moment forgotten all his own sorrows, and was giving his sympathies entirely over to another. He saw that his was not *the* one case of trouble in the world; and as his young mind opened to receive such a truth, and in such a terribly unhappy way, too, he had already learned what all the mere words of feeling friends might not have convinced him of in his lifetime.

Such cries as the poor creature now put forth were not

within the power of description. He got through raving only to tear his hair, or to shake once more at the bars, or to pull off the meager remnants of his thin garments in shreds and tatters. Pacing up and down for the whole length of his apartment, yet every moment keeping his eyes fiercely fixed on his unexpected visitor, he was an object to awaken dread quite as much as compassion. He seemed a monster, though he might, beneath all, have possessed the heart of a woman. The glare of his eyeballs was enough to burn its impression for years upon the brain.

"Come! come! come here!" he called, beckoning with all his might to Gabriel. "I want you here! Nobody comes near me now! I want to look at your eyes! Let me eat your cheeks! They're good—I know they're *good*! Come, and let me get hold of you!"

And then following up these crazy importunities with syllables that no being entirely human could have uttered, he clutched at the boy fiercely through the bars of his prison, while his eyes gleamed with a still increased wildness and ferocity.

"O—o—h! I *must* have you!" again he cried. "I *must* get you! Come to me here! Come in the reach of my hands! I know you, though you don't think so! I know your name! I've seen *your mother*! Yes; I know the story; it's a long one; but I shall tell it some time or other; just listen, and see if I don't! Come—come up to these bars! Let me look into your eyes! They're *gray*, I know! I *like* gray eyes; they burn so into the brain! Come and let me bite once into your cheek!"—and then followed once more those idiotic sounds from the throat.

Some indescribable fascination took possession of the boy, for gradually he moved nearer and nearer the de-

mented prisoner, keeping his eyes all the time fixed on the glaring eyes of the latter. If he was terrified with what he saw, it must have been a terror mixed strangely with a charm; for there was some sort of an influence exerted upon him that could have been little short of downright infatuation.

Just as he had reached the point midway between the great chimney and the cage of the maniac, and appeared to hesitate over the safety of advancing a single step further, the prisoner made a sudden rush with hands, head and feet at the door, and with the effort that only one insane could be believed able to make, he burst down the barrier with as much ease as if it had been mere wicker-work, and precipitated himself on Gabriel.

So unexpected was the onset, the boy was quite overwhelmed with terror; and setting up a loud cry of affright and despair, he ran backward to the chimney and endeavored to secrete himself from his dangerous pursuer. But he found that the latter was already close upon him. He could hear him as he struck down his bare heels with all his force on the floor. He fancied he could see his flying hair, his glaring eyes, and his distorted features, over his shoulders. He even imagined he could feel his hot and sickly breath upon his neck, and that he was ready with his thin and livid lips to whisper something startling in his ears.

One loud and prolonged shriek—it was a shriek of real agony—the child set up, and then ran round and round the chimney for his very life. Still he could hear the sound of that terrible creature's footsteps close behind him. Still he could catch the pantings of his lungs, as he grew more and more excited with the chase. Once or twice he thought he could hold out no longer, but must sink down to the floor from sheer exhaustion. His limbs

grew weaker very sensibly. His knees almost smote together, and he thought they would give him their support but a moment longer. He caught hold by the corners of the chimney as he went round, endeavoring to steady himself in a flight that was fast becoming so irregular.

At just the last moment, and barely in time to take advantage of the only means of escape left him, he happened in the course of his frightful circuits to spy the open trap-door through which he had come up; and making an effort that he could hardly have believed he had strength enough left for, he sprang agilely down through the opening, and was doubly surprised to find himself caught suddenly in another person's arms, and the trap-door shut with a loud bang over his head.

"Gabriel! Gabriel! what *did* you go up there for?" asked a female voice, whose possessor was Mrs. Joy, one of the unfortunate inmates of the place. "How *come* you to go up there?"

He was too much terrified, and too much out of breath, to make her any answer, but suffered himself to be half led and half carried down into his little room again. Mrs. Joy took care to secure the two doors behind her, and hurried away to acquaint Mr. Hardecastle with the situation of the maniac, his wild cries and howlings reverberating through the upper part of the house.

Mrs. Joy afterward sat down with Gabriel on the side of his little bed, and there talked with him of his mother, and of the place where he lived, and of the people who were there around him, until he had in a great degree recovered from his fright, and his terror had changed into tears for the memory of his mother.

CHAPTER III.

BOUND OUT.

"YOU 'LL take the boy then, Mr. Nubbles, will you?" said the Selectman of Epping, conversing in an undeniable business style—and in no other—with a man who had come from a neighboring town to decide upon the matter.

"Wal, as for that, Mr. Jorum, I 'spose I *shall*; but I don't quite make up my mind yet. I must *see* him fust, you know."

"Oh, yes; certainly, Mr. Nubbles! You *shall* see him, of course. A *good* boy he is, Mr. Nubbles; got exactly the right kind of principles; never's been tampered with by nobody—and that sp'iles 'em full as often as any thing, now days; never been bound out yet to human bein': all good and new, he is! Yes, of course you shall see him, Mr. Nubbles. I thought you *had*."

"No, I hav' n't. Shall we go now? I never shall hev' any more time, as I know on."

"Yes, we 'll go now," assented Mr. Jorum. "Besides," he added, as they turned and walked away together—"besides, Mr. Nubbles, you know the town don't want to keep such things on its hands any longer than's absolutely necessary. You understand?"

Was there any covert sneer meant in the use of that word *thing*, that the Selectman of Epping employed

with such a contemptible flippancy? Would a stranger have thought so, do you suppose, had he himself *heard* the expression, and seen the indescribable *look* with which it was accompanied?

Arrived at length at the door of the dreary old poor-house, they immediately entered the room where all the paupers were seated loungingly around, and fell to the business in hand. By mere accident only, Mr. Hardecastle in a few moments got wind of the new arrival, and hurried into the apartment to make himself officially and commendably useful in the matter that was going forward.

It was in the middle of a wintery afternoon, bleak and raw without, and hardly less cheerless within. Men and women listened and looked on with greedy curiosity, eager to see and know all. Old Nathan Grubb had succeeded hitherto in securing the friendship of Gabriel, and was just now occupied with talking to him in the most agreeable and consolatory manner he was able. Both the old man and the boy looked up in a little surprise as the two strangers entered the room.

"Yonder's your boy," said Mr. Jorum, in a remarkably strong voice, pointing with his finger exactly at the face of Gabriel.

"Ah! yes, yes!"

That was all Mr. Nubbles ventured; and forthwith he fell to staring at the orphan most unmercifully. He then ran his eyes rapidly up and down his person, surveying his figure and limbs as he would have surveyed a young colt, fearing lest he might become somehow a loser by his bargain.

"Not very strong in the j'int's, I should n't judge," he finally remarked, turning to the Selectman, who had been idly drumming with his fingers on the back of a chair.

"Ah, Mr. Nubbles," said he, "you don't *know*. These things are the hardest sort o' things to *tell*. The fact is, you may get a prize just when you ain't expecting it, in such a matter as this. These things don't go by any *rule*, Mr. Nubbles."

Mr. Nubbles was encouraged to go on with his survey. The Selectman gazed around the room with a look of unspeakable dignity, and awaited the course of Mr. Nubbles's investigation quite calmly. "Bright looking?" finally suggested the latter, turning his face on that of the town official.

"Certainly he is; uncommonly so, I think," assented Mr. Jorum.

"He *may* do to run of arrants awhile, perhaps—"

"Yes, just so; and do heavier work by and by," interrupted Mr. Jorum.

"Exactly; yis. Is he healthy, do you know?"

"Perfectly so, I believe; isn't he, Mr. Harcastle? *You* know all about it. Mr. Nubbles here talks of havin' him bound out to *him*: taking him off your hands you know. Perfectly healthy, ain't he, Mr. Harcastle?"

"I *believe* so," answered the keeper. "I'm sure, I never knew nothin' to the contrary. Ain't very *big*, as you can see for yourself; but never's sick at all, not sense he's been with me; and that's sense a year ago, comin' next spring."

"Hear that, Mr. Nubbles, don't you?" asked the Selectman.

"No," reaffirmed Mr. Harcastle, wishing to please his principal all he could, "I reck'n that boy never see a sick day yet. Mis' Harcastle, you know Mr. Jorum, is one o' the very best o' nurses. There's no denyin' that, now."

"Yes, I believe she is. There's as little *expensive* sick-

ness in this house, Mr. Nubbles, I'll venture to say, as in any house of the same kind in any town in New England, I don't care *where* the town is. Yes, *sir*; I think we might congratulate ourselves as a town, that we've got as good a *doctor* here as we've got *housekeeper*. There's a great deal in that, Mr. Nubbles!" and he lengthened out the word *great*, till the very sound of it made a deep impression no less on the paupers assembled than on Mr. Nubbles's own self.

"Does Mr. Nubbles talk of takin' the boy?" asked the poor-house keeper, directing his attention to the Selectman.

"Yes, he does," said Mr. Jorum, rather curtly.

"Then I can tell him he'll git a mighty nice boy for his bargain; that's all *I* can say about it. The boy's nothin' more nor less than *a treasure*; and I rather reckon Mr. Nubbles'll find it out 'fore he gits through with it!"

"I guess I'll take him," finally spoke out the latter, as if he were going to make the best of a bad bargain. "I must try and do *somethin'* with him."

The Selectman thereupon drew up to a little table, and borrowing from Mr. Harcastle a small volume of legal forms that he usually kept by him, squared away at a large sheet of rather smutty foolscap, and commenced copying and filling up the skeleton of an "indenture." Meanwhile Mr. Harcastle removed Gabriel to the apartment sacred to his wife's uses, where he found her, as usual, surrounded with all the comforts she could, by parsimonious economy, impress into a place like that, and to whom he proceeded to communicate the exact state of things.

"You'll git him ready, Mis' Harcastle, won't ye," said he, "while I go out in t' other room with Mr. Jorum? I can't stop, ye see."

"But what's to hinder *your* gittin' the boy ready yourself, I want to know?" returned his amiable spouse. "I'm sure I don't see, for the life of me, what the' is *to be done!* He hain't got no clo's, *as I know on*, except what he's got on his back this minnit; and as for givin' him an outfit, jest because he's goin' away, it's a thing, Mr. Hardeastle, I can't in any conscience do! It's a thing, furthermore, Mr. Hardeastle, that I *shan't* do! *You* can git him ready as well as *I* can."

"But you see, Mis' Hardeastle," plead he, "you see they want me in t'other room!"

"What for, now?" she asked, looking him full in the face.

"Wha' for! Why, to help about drawin' up the writin's and things, of course."

"Then *go* in t'other room ~~with~~ you," said she; "but I tell you once for all, that boy's got nothin' at all to pack. If he's bound out to any body it'll be without any *clothin'*, I'm *very* sure!"

Upon this Mr. Hardeastle returned to the other apartment, and posted himself exactly behind the chair of the Selectman, looking with the eye of a hawk over his shoulder at every mark, sign and letter that was made, and upon every word that was written. Now and then, during the respite of a brief conversation between the Selectman and Mr. Nubbles, he marched stridingly around the room among his brow-beaten and spirit-broken subjects, as if with a desire to impress them afresh with the consequence to which he had that day attained; and then he walked deliberately and impressively back to his place near the table again. The precise amount of assistance he rendered on this occasion it might be easier for himself than for any one else present to compute.

At last the instrument, legally known as the indenture,

was finished. Already were the many threads of the afternoon beginning to draw together, and Mr. Nubbles had still ten miles, or such a matter, to ride before he would reach home. He started up rather abruptly from his seat, and proceeded to button his coarse shaggy overcoat about him.

"Wal," said he; "where 's my boy now?"

"All ready for ye," returned Mr. Hardcastle with alacrity; "waitin' here jest in the next room."

They went out into the entry, and there stood little Gabriel, thinly enough clad for such a time as that, without any over-garment, without the slightest protection for his hands, and bitterly crying.

"What 's the matter?" inquired Mr. Jorum, affecting a feeling of tenderness, now he had got the pauper off his hands. "What do you cry for? Don't you want to go where you 'll have a new home? It is n't every one that can *get* as good a home as *you're* going to. Just remember that, will you? and then stop your crying."

"Hain't he got no overcoat?" asked Mr. Nubbles, possibly as anxious to secure all the boy's clothes as to provide any thing additional for his comfort. "He 'll freeze!"

"No," said Mr. Hardcastle; "he 'll have to do without. He had n't none when he come here, and we've managed one way and another somehow to keep him warm without."

"Nor mittens, neither?" pursued Mr. Nubbles.

"He had a pair, but he did n't take care on 'em at all, and they're pootey much worn out, I guess, by this time."

Mr. Nubbles humanely proposed to borrow something to wrap him in, for the ride was to be a long and a cold one; besides, they were to make the journey in an open wagon.

"You'll fetch it back agin if I lend you an old coat?" said Mr. Harcastle.

"Certain: if I don't, I can send it to you, you know." Then he turned upon Gabriel, while the keeper had gone for the garment in question: "Don't you want to go home with me, my little lad," said he. Gabriel felt too sad to make any answer; he had strange thoughts even for a child of his years, and such as he could not communicate.

Pretty soon Mr. Harcastle returned. He held a grotesque article of wearing apparel in his hand, quartered and divided up into innumerable pieces—stripes, patches, and mosaic—of every variety of size, shape and color. It seemed to be a work more for human curiosity to feed on than for a human being to keep warm with.

Clapping it suddenly over Gabriel's shoulders, so that it almost buried him up in its enveloping folds, Mr. Harcastle bade the boy keep up good heart and make the best of every thing, and he would get along.

He *was* "getting along" even then!

When his old master bade him good-by, and watched him afterward as he followed Mr. Nubbles across the yard to his wagon, he really presented a ludicrous sight, though a sorry one. But far beneath the humor that would have been stirred in a looker-on, was another feeling—that of the profoundest pity. Once or twice Gabriel turned partly round to catch a final look at the old house—filled with dear memories to him, yet otherwise so forbidding—and the tears blinded his eyes and ran down his cheeks.

"Come on!" called Mr. Nubbles. "Faster!"

Gabriel made an effort to run in order to catch up; and in so doing he nearly threw himself down from entanglement in the folds of his enormous garment. As he

climbed into Mr. Nubble's wagon, he threw his last look—half sorrowful and half wistful—in the direction of the old Epping poor-house.

It was dark, or very nearly so; when they came to their journey's end. The orphan could only comprehend, in the midst of his excitement and the gloomy evening shadows that were falling around him, that he had arrived at a shed standing but a few yards from a house, in which were indiscriminately piled away old wagons, cart bodies, sleighs, barrels, and odd wheels, with an additional variety of trumpery that he could not distinguish, and through the whole of which the horse was to be conducted to his stall in the barn.

"You stan' here," said Mr. Nubbles, "while I put my horse out." And Gabriel stood there, and shivered and shook with the cold.

When at length his new friend was quite ready, he sallied forth from the barn-door—wherever in the darkness that may be—and came upon Gabriel through the mysterious alley of barrels and wagon-wheels with considerable suddenness.

"*Now* we'll go in," said he. "Jest foller arter me."

The high kitchen-door opened, and the boy immediately found himself in a spacious room much larger than he remembered ever to have seen in a country farm-house before, with a flashing and blazing fire on a very broad hearth that sufficed to light the entire apartment with its dazzling flames. A starved and shriveled tallow-candle burned on a table against the further wall, at which stood a tall, thin, shrewish-looking woman, her hair very much snarled and tangled, peeling potatoes into a deep wooden tray. She was preparing a supper of mincemeat against the arrival of Mr. Nubbles.

On each side of the hearth that extended very far out

into the room, stood a wooden chair or two of odd patterns and sizes, in one of which was sitting a good-sized boy gazing stupidly into the fire. He owned a round pumpkin-shaped head, whose carroty hair was cut low over his forehead after the law of a perfectly straight line; and in his face lurked an impression that he might not yet be altogether "done," in spite of his habit of hugging to the fire so persistently. When Gabriel entered he looked up from the fire at him with an expression of the most settled stupidity. His eyes were like dead and dull fish eyes; the protruding cheeks seemed trying to close them entirely. His half turned-up nose gave his countenance an additional expression of insensibility to every thing not related to those two pursuits—eating and drinking—and his lips were not at all behindhand in making complete the original design of the picture. As he looked up at Gabriel his mother at the table turned round likewise.

"Hullo, father!" saluted the boy, grasping a knee in each hand.

"You see I've fetched him," said Mr. Nubbles to his wife, who stood regarding the youngling with a look he thought decidedly ferocious.

"Wal," said she, quite slow in her articulation; "I sh'd think you had!" And she fell to piercing and riddling him with her gimlet gray eyes again.

Mr. Nubbles took off the orphan's borrowed greatcoat, and bade him go warm himself by the fire.

"What do you s'pose he's good for, now?" began the mistress of the place, concentrating the very verjuice of her persimmon nature into a single look at her husband.

"Good for!" exclaimed he. "Work, to be sure!"

"Don't you be too sure o' that, let me tell you! See what a little bony thing he is! Look at his hands, and

his doll arms, and his tender flesh! Just see what dreadful slight build he's got! Why, I could almost blow him away with my own breath! Pshaw, Nahum Nubbles! *Pshaw*, I say, Nahum! You *are* a smart man, as every body 'il say!"

"Hold on," said the husband. "You're in a little too big hurry, I guess, about it. Jest give my little chap a *trial* first. You don't know yet what there may be in his gristle. Wait till you've tried him once, Kitty."

"*Him!*" ejaculated the wife very contemptuously in reply, still holding the knife and fork with which she had been taking off the jackets of the potatoes; "I would n't *look* at him; he can't earn his porridge; no, nor even the salt he'll need to put into it! See him, now—the poor, lean, shaky, starved-to-death, miserable little wretch!—and then look at our Kit by the side of him! See the difference for yourself, will you, if you *can*! No, no—I say—don't bring any of your little weazen-bodied fellows to *me*! If you do they'll be pretty sure to get *worked* to death, and that's all I've got to say about it!"

"Wal, work 'em as hard as you're a mind to, then," answered Mr. Nubbles. "It's nothing to *me*, I am sure. Come; I sh'd like my supper: I'm *hungry* if you've stopped to think of it!"

"Hungry!" sneered the gaunt female again; "I sh'd reckon you would be, ridin' home with such a hungry-lookin' chap as *that* all the time before your eyes! I'm sure, Nahum Nubbles, I'd never rob the poor *crows*, 'specially at this time o' year, when it's harder 'n usual for 'em to git their livin', you see!" And upon this she turned immediately around to her tray, and soon had the broad blade of her chopping-knife slicing and mincing together the meat and potatoes, of which that wooden dish had been made the receptacle.

At the fire young Kit sat eyeing the little desolate-looking stranger with every bit of the intensity of which his dead eyes were capable; not for a single moment removing them from his face and person. He inspected his clothes, every article and rag of them, one by one; now his short and thin jacket; now his insufficient shoes, over the rough and horny edges of which his coarse blue stockings dangled about his heels; and now his short-limbed pantaloons, as short as they well could be, whether consistently or inconsistently with comfort. Then he fell foul of his face, and studied with commendable care every lineament, staring chiefly, however—as he naturally would—at his highly expressive and beautiful eyes. Gabriel began to grow a trifle uneasy under this annoying infliction, and looked from him to the fire, and from the fire again to him, folding and unfolding his hands in his lap continually.

Mr. Nubbles had absented himself from the room. To tell the exact truth, Mr. Nubbles had gone out in obedience to what was quite a regular habit with him, whether about going from home, or recently returned to that spot; he had just stepped out, as he humorously expressed himself, to “wet his whistle.” So the woman finding herself all alone with the boys suddenly stopped the motion of her chopping-knife, and called out to her son—

“Why don’t you speak to him, Christopher? See if he can *talk*! See if he *knows* any thing, why don’t you?”

Kit, the family pet, on being thus appealed to, merely suffered his eyes to slide, by a motion peculiar to himself, from the object on which they had long been fixed over to his encouraging mother—and then as quietly suffered them to slide back again.

"Ask him what his name is, Kit," persisted his mother, rising to empty the contents of her tray into a spider.

"It's Gabriel Vane," timidly yet trustingly answered the orphan, hoping by his own promptness to get their favor in advance.

"Gabriel?" sneered and laughed Mrs. Nubbles. "Named after the *angel*, I s'pose?"

"Ma'am?" inquired he, thinking she had soberly put him a question that he must answer.

"No matter," she replied, a little abashed by the innocent tone in which he spoke; and immediately she placed the spider full of mince-meat upon some coals she had drawn out on the hearth, and drew the supper table into the middle of the floor. Just then Mr. Nubbles made his appearance again, coughing and wiping his lips with his sleeve.

"I wish you would n't leave your company for *me* to entertain," said his wife, clapping down the plates, and knives and forks upon the bare table as fast as she could.

"For *you*!" said Mr. Nubbles. "Ha! ha! I did n't. Kit, can't *you* amuse the boy? Kit," he repeated, sidling up to his son and pretending to speak in a tone of profound secrecy to him, though Gabriel could hear what he said as well as Kit—"I've brought home somebody to do your *chores* for ye! How d' ye like that?"

"I like it, father," answered the pig-like young creature. "I git sick o' cleanin' out the stable, and feedin' the hogs, and doin' all such things. I don't like to do it, father. Shan't I have nothin' to do, then? Thunder! that's good, ain't it?" And the youth chuckled, and swelled out his fat cheeks, and squeezed together his small eyes, and drew in his head like a mud-turtle within his collar, till his father laughed aloud to see what excellent spirits he had been the means of putting him in.

"Yes, but there's work enough for you to do, Christopher," interrupted his mother, who was now taking up the smoking mince-meat into a brown earthen dish; "but then, I don't calc'late any child of mine'll ever live to do what's for another to do, sich a one as that one yonder for instance."

"You're right there, Miss Nubbles," returned her husband. "I'm with you there, Kitty."

And after this little passage all sat down to table except Gabriel; he hesitated.

"Come, set up," called Mr. Nubbles.

"I don't wish any," said Gabriel, scarcely knowing what excuse he could make that would seem even plausible.

"Don't want any! Yes, you do. Set up here."

"La! Mr. Nubbles," broke in his wife, "I would n't force him to eat against his will, I'm sure. Do let him go without if he wants to. His appetite will come to him soon enough for *our* purpose, I'll warrant you."

Could she at that moment have looked into Gabriel's heart, she would have seen that he was sincerely thanking her for her timely interference.

"What's the odds?" she went on, coarsely. "If he feels as if this wasn't good enough for him, then let him go back to old Epping poorhouse again. Perhaps he'll manage to find something better over there!"

"I don't feel hungry," meekly put in Gabriel.

"Wal, but you'd better set up even if you don't," said Mr. Nubbles; "you can't tell when you may be." So Gabriel reluctantly complied, and took his place between the husband and the wife, and exactly opposite Kit. That youth had not wasted any time on preliminary ceremonies. Seizing his knife and fork the instant he sat down with a gluttonous wink of his dead eyes, and a contortion of his countenance that was mistakingly

meant for an unbounded expression of delight, he dove like an expert swimmer right to the bottom of his work, and came up to the surface again with his mouth and cheeks crammed to distention with the hot mince-meat he had watched while cooking with such envious greediness.

Gabriel only sipped a little tea, which Mrs. Nubbles was considerate enough to make very weak for him; and ate a mouthful or two of brown crust, but nothing more. His eyes wandered every where about the room, and upon every body and every thing its four great walls contained. It seemed to him as if his olden griefs had now been not only entirely renewed but increased fourfold.

CHAPTER IV.

KIT NUBBLES.

GABRIEL was allowed a bed in a further corner of the wretched old garret, almost under the very furthest reach of the eaves, where through the wide cracks and chinks the raw air poured in on all sides in jets and spouts, and streams. A straw bed fell to his share, meagerly supplied with straw at that; and his feet stood on the icy cold floor every night he drew off his stockings.

The sad-hearted boy liked most to get off early to bed at night, where he felt secure from the unfeeling attacks so plentifully made on him by the rest of the household; and where too, he might in peaceful though sorrowful silence, let his thoughts go out to his dear, dear mother. Tears almost nightly wet his pillow. When he did get permission to go to bed, he was generally so tired with his work, and so much saddened with his day's busy thoughts, that tears brought him the only relief he ever felt. So he often wept himself asleep under the low eaves of the dreary garret, and knew nothing more of his griefs until morning.

Why was Mrs. Nubbles indulgent enough to give him a bed by himself? It is a question, really. Her husband had once taken the liberty to put her the very same one himself.

"Do you think I'd have a poor, puny, decayed little

pauper sleep in the same bed with our Christopher—our only child, Nahum Nubbles!” said she.

And the reader has got *his* answer, too.

It was Gabriel's lot to be kept at work continually. Mrs. Nubbles said that if it was *in* him, she was determined to get it *out of* him; and therefore set him about all the odds and ends of labor, both in doors and out, that she could pick up or devise. Now he lugged across the yard a heavy pail of swill; now he carried potatoes and turnips in a large basket that he could scarcely lift, to the cows; now he bore bundles of one thing and another for her, from the garret to the cellar, and so back again; and now he brought in heavy armfuls of green wood from the door-yard, picking the fuel from the snow and ice as he was best able. Any thing to keep him busy. Any thing to strain those slight limbs, and weaken that slender chest, and break that too fine spirit.

On one subject Mrs. Nubbles had put her foot down at the outset, and that was that the boy should be made to work, and do nothing but work. And then what remained for her husband but to acquiesce with all his feeble might and main in the spirit of her energetic determination? He might be led to this chiefly out of regard for his own comfort; for had he ventured to cross, in the least, the pleasure of his other half in a matter like this, he would in all probability have found his wife and boy both about his ears, to his manifest disquiet and inconvenience. So, on a principle thought to be pretty generally recognized in affairs of a more public nature, he yielded in silence to the ascertained will of the majority, and lagged not behind in the petty persecution he saw was going forward.

The residence of Mr. Nahum Nubbles was set upon an elevation of land, from which could be seen several hills

and swells of ground more or less covered with trees, and around which lay stretched out a tract of nature in its almost primitive condition. Back from his moss-grown orchard reached the forest, with huge rocks sprinkled thickly among the trees, and rugged ledges rising here and there within the distant shadows. The face of the ground was rough and stony exceedingly; so that as Mr. Nubbles was known to get his living altogether off his farm, it was equally well known that that living must be but a lean one.

Years ago he had resided in another town; and for a man with industrious and persevering habits, probably enjoyed as good opportunities of rising in the world as the average. He was once a member of a church, too, in good standing. But becoming implicated in various speculating transactions, into which he was drawn by those far shrewder and more designing than himself, he found his property insensibly slipping little by little through his fingers; and, to crown his misfortune, he surrendered himself—for consolation's sake, undoubtedly—to the habit of drinking. In his cups he felt himself proof against the heavy influences of adverse fortune; and he then sometimes even hailed the intelligence of a fresh disaster with a glee that could have come from none but one half drunken.

The habit grew upon him immeasurably. It was a perfect leech to him, all the time crying out, "Give! give!" Step by step he went down—mortgaging a piece of his farm here, and selling outright a fat slice there—until he was finally obliged to think seriously of abandoning the remainder of it altogether, and removing to a place that he could secure with the wreck of what was left. To add to his troubles—if, indeed, it troubled him at all—he had been formally dismissed from the church with which he

had united, being esteemed an unworthy member and of an evil example.

So to do the best he could in the midst of such an emergency, he bought the run-down, deserted old place he now occupied, brown house, crazy sheds, tumble-down barns and all—where, he said, he could live out of the reach of people altogether. It was a lonely place, sure enough. The house stood on a little level exactly on the brow of the acclivity, and all around lay the good-for-nothing pastures, meadows, orchards and fields. Of hard cider he made as much as of any thing else; he said that was all his apples were good for. Of corn he raised barely enough to go through the year. And of potatoes, and those other indispensable crops to the farmer, he had not much more to say than of the rest. Every thing looked slack and behindhand. There was not the first mark of thrift any where to be seen. Carts and wagons were left out to fall to pieces through the winter; and the summer exposure performed the same business for sleighs and ox-sleds.

The place was a good two miles from the neighboring village, and by a very lonely and untraveled road. Those at the village who spoke of it always called it Worrywitch Hill. It had gone by that name long before he thought of settling upon it; probably from some far-back tale connected with an old woman and a witch, or something equally well founded, that had become traditionary in the neighborhood. There were scrub-oaks and stunted thorn-apples growing plentifully along the road leading from the village to Worrywitch; and pastures on either side the stone walls showed abundant crops, in their season, of fern, mullen, thistles and rocks. If a thrifty man were in search of good land, he would have been sure, on seeing this locality, to set his face exactly the other way; no

matter where it led, it could take him to no worse a place than this.

Gabriel found that his new master was already little less than a vagabond, and his wife not much more than a shrew. Their son was a spoiled creature, taught by every method to be obstinate and self-willed, without the least particle of generosity in him, and with as overbearing a disposition toward the orphan as he could possibly muster. And between the steady fires of all, kept up without intermission from the time he first beheld them in the morning until he left them for his straw bed at night, Gabriel truly lived but a sorry life of it. Mr. Nubbles was good-natured to him at times; but Mrs. Nubbles meant that he should be left alone with her husband just as little as possible. She looked out sharply that the thorn of labor was never pulled out from his side. Her shrill voice was all the time ringing in his ears, as she called continually after him—"Gabriel! here!" Even a stolen moment was not allowed him, in which he could draw a long breath or fold his hands from the task he had last been upon. It was "Gabriel! Gabriel!" all the time.

When evening came he either pared apples, or sewed or wound carpet-rags, or stood, girt about with a long piece of coarse brown toweling, pumping away with all his might at an old-fashioned churn; while Kit sat at the fireside slowly vegetating in the warmth and the blaze, and contemplating him with looks of the utmost profundity and satisfaction.

He was engaged in churning one afternoon, as usual, when Kit entered the kitchen and found him entirely alone. This he liked; for it would give him an opportunity he had long coveted to visit the orphan with his severest tyranny. So he began:

"Who be you, *any* how?" he asked; and immediately

slid his chunks of hands into his side-pockets, and regaled himself with a good hearty stare.

Gabriel was not at first inclined to answer him, but pushed and pressed away as hard as he could at the old churn.

"I say," repeated Kit, his eyes glowing a little, "who *be* you, boy? You're *somebody*, I s'pose!"

"My name is Gabriel Vane," was the mild reply: "I thought you knew that."

"Humph! But s'pose I do? What then? I'll have you to tell it to me over agin, if I like, I guess! Don't go to givin' me none o' your *sass*, now; for—for—I—I" (he was swelling with passion) "I don't *take* sass from *no* boy! 'specially them that comes from poor-houses! You needn't feel too big in *this* house, I can tell you!"

The face of Gabriel quickly flushed, for his blood was heated; and he pushed down his churn-handle with much more than his wonted vigor. He ventured, however, no reply.

"I s'pose you know what father brought you here for, don't ye?" he asked, after a pause.

Down went the old churn-pole again harder than ever; but no answer yet.

"And I s'pose you understand what you was afore you come?—nothing but a town pauper—a *beggar*! You'd orter be very thankful to my father for what he's done, I can tell you!"

Gabriel had something ready on his tongue's end to say to this, but by a great effort he managed to keep it back.

"Tell me who you *be*, then," again repeated the young villain. "Why don't you tell?"

"You know," said Gabriel.

"No, I don't: your *name* I know; but that ain't nothin'. Who's your mother?"

"She's dead," was the sad answer.

"Dead, is she? So she is. I've heard father *say* you had n't got no mother. What did she die of?"

"I can't tell you," said Gabriel.

"Guess she was n't any very *great* shakes," pursued he; "if she was, she'd ha' kept herself out o' the *poor-house*; and such a one as the Epping poor-house, too!"

Gabriel took fire. "I liked it better than I do here," said he, with a flushed face.

"Oh, you *did*, hey! Wal, then, why don't ye go right back there agin? What do you stay here for, you young sass-box?"

"I would if I could, I'm sure."

"Come, now; you need n't go to sayin' any thing ag'inst livin' here with my mother, nor nothin' about it; for I sha'n't stan'it, so! Do ye *hear*? Then jest look out for yourself, sir!"

"You talked against *my* mother," put in Gabriel, in justification.

"I know I did; but that's a different thing, I'd have you to understand, now. *My* mother—every body all over the world knows what she is; but who was *yours*? Who was there that knew her? What was she but a *pauper*?—and what's a *pauper*, I want to know? So jest be careful of yourself, you young Vane, there!"

"I sha'n't stand and hear you abuse my mother," said Gabriel, with a great deal of spirit.

"You won't, hey? What're ye goin' to *do* about it, now? Come, sir," and he moved up nearer to him, and began to flourish his fist quite valiantly in his face, "come now, sir! what're ye goin' to *do* about it?"

Gabriel let go the churn, and looked as straight as he could into the young rascal's face. His eyes burned like coals of fire. The blood crimsoned his cheeks for a mo-

ment, and then left them altogether. He stood pale as a lifeless person.

"Jest churn away there!" ordered Kit, the petty tyrant.

The boy made no movement in the way of obeying him, but continued looking in his face.

"Do you hear? Churn away, or I'll—I'll—" and there his rage choked his utterance.

"Take *that*, then!" said he, as he rubbed the dirty palm of his fat hand roughly down Gabriel's face.

The latter instantly sprang upon the overgrown young monster with all the power his passion gave him, and grappled him fairly by his great thick throat. Upon this, Kit—who really was very much more than a match for the other—convulsively threw out both hands, and grabbed just as many handfuls of the smaller one's hair. This manoeuvre brought tears to the eyes of Gabriel at once. Instead, however, of letting go, he only proceeded to twist and screw at the enemy's throat the more earnestly, till he forced the fat creature to cry out—quite sluggishly, to be sure—

"Oh! O—o—oh! Ye—ye—ch—ch—chok'!"

Exactly at this crisis, the door opened, and who should enter but the mistress of the mansion, and the mother of the valiant Kit. Her arms were filled with bundles of wool from the shed, where she had been engaged in sorting it over; but she threw them with all precipitancy upon the floor, and sprang forward to the rescue. "What's this; what does this all mean?" she said.

Each, very naturally, at once let go of the other.

Gabriel did not speak; but stood beside his churn in silence, the tears standing in big drops in his eyes. Kit, however, as soon as he could catch his breath again, set about his explanation, while his mother continued to stand with her hand uplifted against his opponent.

"He abused *you*, mother, an' I—I pitched into him! That's all," said Kit.

"You *did*, hey, you young vagabond, you? Abuse *me*, did ye, you pauper? I'll teach ye!"—and she filled *her* hand, in turn, with the same locks that had just been relinquished by her hopeful son. "Abused *me*, hey?—and here I am, takin' the best of care of ye all the time, and tryin' all I can do to keep ye from freezin' and starvin'! We'll see, sir, about that—we'll see!" and she jerked the helpless boy very vigorously this way and that by the hair of his head, till he almost found it impossible to keep his feet at all.

"He said hard things of *my* mother," Gabriel made an attempt to utter.

"You *did*, did you?" she went on. "You abused *me*, did you? I'll show how to git into my house, and abuse me to my own and only child, and then fall afoul of him with your pauper hands besides! Yes, and you was goin' to *choke* him, too, was ye?—to *choke* him, you little wretch! I'll show ye how to choke people, now! I'll teach ye, sir!"

So to make her threat good, she seized him by the throat too, and held on upon it until his face became almost black.

"That's the way! that's the way, mother!" shouted Kit, from the chair to which by the laws of self-preservation he had prudently retreated; "give it to him, mother! Let him see how good it feels to be tickled in such a spot as that! That's good, mother! Only see the little pauper choke! Only see how black he's a gittin' in the face!"

And with another, and a still tighter twist of her vice-like gripe, she forced him to cry out with all the remaining strength he possessed; after which, boxing his head

soundly on both sides, she pushed him down upon the cellar stairs, and shut and secured the door after him, leaving him in utter darkness.

Gabriel sat down pale and faint, and wept long alone. He recalled the sorrows of his short life, and vainly tried to see a way into the future. The rupture with the Nubbles family was now complete and irreconcilable.

CHAPTER V.

TEN-ACRE ELYSIUM.

How steadily it did rain—drip, drip, drip from the eaves—and swash, swash, swash along through the gutters! It was in the latter part of the month of April, when multitudinous “showers” may naturally be expected—if banking snow-storms do not unnaturally take their place—preparatory to the bringing forth of what are conceded, by an agreeable fiction, to be “May flowers.”

It was a gray, dull, blankety rain, more after the nature of a running mist than a falling shower, and for all of twenty hours it had been visiting the face of the earth with its ungenial offices. The naked tree-boughs were dripping. The shrubbery along the country roadside looked half-drowned, and altogether sadly bedraggled. Old stone walls took upon them a duller and a grayer suit than ever, and seemed to be sinking finally out of sight in the thick mist and fog-banks. Sullen and grisly-looking vapors, like brown and dun smokes, brooded over and within warm nooks, and the wet fields began at last to smoke from the glowing warmth.

There stood back on a slight elevation from the distant plain below, a neat and tasteful rural structure, built evidently years ago, but recently repaired and refurbished for its present occupants, which offered the casual observer as pleasant a picture—prospectively, at least—of home hap-

piness as the country any where around could produce. Inviting as the spot must look when surrounded with the verdure of June, it was really so, even at the present time, with the rain, drip—drip—dripping from the roof upon the piazza, and the shrubbery bent down with the weight of the gathering drops.

It was a warm rain, and was doing a vast deal of good. The roots and bulbs that had just been set out about the yard would find their account in it before it was over. The buds on the fruit-trees began to swell and break under its influences, promising them a new and showy livery in as short a time—if the weather should continue warm—as trees ought reasonably to expect. Here and there the grass had turned itself into a light and delicate green, showing off very favorably by contrast with the deadened color of every thing else. The lilacs, by the little gatepost, had pushed their leaves along further than any other bushes or shrubs, and threatened to expand in a few days, what now showed as long and slim mouse-ears, into broad and open surfaces that would make their shadows on the ground.

The place consisted of some ten or a dozen acres—"be the same more or less," as the legal instruments say—and was tastefully remodeled by its present owner, who had but just removed thither from the city. The name of the proprietor was Mr. Rivers; who had been for a long time a successful and wealthy merchant in town, but upon whom misfortunes had latterly fallen so fast and interruptedly, that he was compelled to give way before them. Out of them all he was finally extricated by a majority of his creditors, who, holding unabated confidence still in his personal integrity, and feeling unwilling that a man, who by bare misfortune had been suddenly reduced from affluence to want, should be stripped of even the comforts

of life, made liberal provision for his future by setting aside, each one of them, a certain portion of their fully satisfied claims. This was highly honorable; and might be practiced, with profit, in still other cases than that of Mr. Rivers.

Accordingly he found himself with property enough left to purchase a snug residence in the country, where he might have just land enough to engross the greater portion of his attention, and live in a style of as perfect independence and freedom from care as mortal could wish. So to the country he went, far—far away from the city, where the lengthening radius of its great influence would not readily reach. The spot to which the reader is herewith introduced was the spot in which he invested his money, and to which, after suitable repairs and improvements, he had just brought his family.

There were only himself and his wife, his two daughters and a maid-servant, to comprise that family, the farmer not having yet been employed for the season; and quite a pretty family, too, they promised to make in their novel situation. Mrs. Rivers was the second wife of her husband, and but a step-mother to the girls; who seemed to entertain a high respect for her, that came as near as any thing could to downright affection.

The names of the two sisters were Mary and Martha. Mary was the elder, and rather the more impulsive and flighty of the two; Martha was but two years her junior, a girl of great vivacity united to a deep and thoughtful nature, and with a figure perfectly expressive of the beautiful spirit that governed its every motion. When Mr. Rivers first proposed to his daughters his plan of retiring to the pleasant old country solitudes, laying open to them, as he almost always did in important cases, the motives that incited him to make the change contem-

plated, their feelings were quite in strong contrast with each other in relation to the subject; and they began directly to debate the matter *pro* and *con*, according to the best of their ability. Mary did not like the idea of coming into the country at all; she disliked the country; yes, she even said, in an impulse, she *hated* it. It was so very dull. The people were so very rude and ignorant. And then to think of living right in the dirt, with laboring men sweating in the sun all around one, and pigs and cattle squealing and bellowing at the barn, and nothing to look at or think of but the same eternal old round of things without interest, and with their novelty and freshness entirely gone! How *could* she hear of this sudden change in her father's plans without giving free rein to her expressions of disquiet and disgust. How *could* she think of leaving the sights and sounds that were to be heard within city limits for the uncertain enjoyment of persons and objects with which she might be supposed to have no sympathy at all. She knew very well the crippled pecuniary condition of her father, yet she seemed to have no thought at all for the step which that condition compelled him to take.

Martha, the younger sister, was as different as she could possibly be. It being understood that neither of the girls was destitute of personal attractions, the fact might as well be added that Martha was a person of a peculiar and fascinating style of beauty. She was just tall enough, and just full enough. Her step was light and graceful, not at all too proud, and not at all too careless. But it was in her sweet face, always alive with the expressions of her glowing thoughts, and ever wreathed with the pleasantest of smiles, that her charm chiefly lay. With blue eyes, light complexion, regular features, and that vivacious expression continually flitting over her

face, she was quite irresistible. She won her way to your confidence at once. Indeed, she seemed to wish to make you her intimate friend and the sharer of all her thoughts from the moment you fell in with her.

It was not at all like this with Mary. She was a cynic so far as two or three things were concerned ; and going into the country was one of those things. On that point it would be vain to try to change her mode of feeling. Her mind was made up, and there was an end of it. And so the sisterly debate went on from the morning on which their father first communicated his design until the very day—and a very long time after, too—when the reader finds them duly introduced to his or her acquaintance.

The ride into the village, on the outskirts of which they dwelt, from the railroad station, was full of delight and wonder to Martha ; but Mary was certain it was just the deadest, dullest, excursion, long or short, that she had ever made ; and what there could be on the road for any one to enjoy was totally past *her* comprehension. "Perhaps," said she to her sister, "it's the cows in yonder lot !"

"Yes, I admire sleek, handsome cows, Mary," answered her sister. "I hope father will have as pretty and as gentle creatures as there are to be had any where. I should love to learn to milk myself."

Mary was of course astonished—shocked. She had given her sister credit for a more refined taste than to be looking after horned cattle, and told her so ; but all she got for her pains was a roguish laugh, and the sight of a fresh face full of happiness.

The name of the village was Draggledew Plain. It was a natural scoop out between several gentle hills that saluted the sun at his earliest coming and held its linger-

ing light upon their bosom until it died down below the horizon. Within this natural plain, stretching from hill to hill, lay the quiet little village, a pleasant spot, in which the stranger would expect of course to find contentment in plenty. There was a church, a tavern-house, a post-office, and a school-house in the village; and the variety of character within its limits was as truly wonderful as within the circuit of a town incomparably its superior both in wealth and population. It was at a distance of from three quarters of a mile to a mile from the village green that Mr. Rivers had selected his place of retirement, where he meant to cultivate, for the future, with all his might the few acres of his rural domain.

The girls were standing on the piazza at the end of the house, at the close of the afternoon, the rain and mist still drizzling down every where over the face of the earth. They had been contemplating the untoward weather from that position for some time before either spoke. At length Mary began, evidently renewing a conversation they were engaged upon but a short time before.

"You like the country, you say," she taunted pleasantly. "Now won't you please tell me what particular part of it pleases you just at this time? I really am a little curious to know. Unless you consent to inform me, I fear I may sometimes make entirely wrong estimates, when they would perhaps subject me to mortification."

"Well," responded Martha, her happy countenance beaming with roguish pleasure strangely enough mixed up with sisterly affection, "just at this time I must say I am most pleased with the rain! Perhaps though, it's because there's more of it just now than of any thing else. But I like a rain, especially a good warm rain in the spring. Don't you?"

"Don't I! You know what I think of it; and you must know how very disagreeable above all other things it is to me, away out here from every body I ever knew in my life. What a question!"

"Well, now, upon my word, Mary, and all seriously too," said Martha, "I must confess that I enjoy this dripping storm as much as any one can enjoy such things. I feel such a sense of easiness stealing over me, as if the rain without did but shut us up so much the more delightfully within. And I like to look off over the half-drowned landscape, and see the bleak winter melting out of sight into the earth, and the great changes in nature getting ready to burst forth. It awakens deep thoughts in me; I can not tell what they exactly are, but I experience quite enough to know that my nature is deeply stirred.

"If I only knew what your thoughts *were*!" said Mary.

"If I only knew how to go to work to set your feelings right on this subject!" added her younger sister, "it would add by just so much to my own happiness here. Why, Mary, only look about you. This is not the pleasantest part of the season yet, I know; but that doesn't prevent one's finding something quite agreeable even now. Isn't this nature? and does nature ever weary one? Why, you don't put yourself in a true position from which to look at these things. You are all the time comparing what you see here with what you have left in town. I know you are."

"That would be nothing strange, as I see. But how can I help it? What would you have me do?—throw away all the refinement of my feelings at a single fling of my hand, and become as much a boor as the rest of creation all around me here. Is that a condition upon which alone I can be permitted to enjoy what you call rustic life?"

"No, not at all, sister; but this is the way *I* try to view it: I reflect that as one's enjoyment in the city depends altogether on her associations there, so one's happiness in the country depends on her corresponding associations here. In other words, dear Mary, in the two places we find ourselves surrounded by two sets of circumstances; and all we have to do at first is to try and conform to them in some manner. You must n't expect to find here what is to be found every day in town; nor must you think that the town offers cheap and innocent enjoyments that are only to be found here. The two views of the subject are just as separate and distinct as the two places are themselves. But for my part I am going to try and like the country: and I don't think I shall need to try very hard, either."

"Oh, dear!" said Mary, after a little pause; "I only wish father had bought a house somewhere else; any where but in this dismal place! I never shall live *out* here half my days; I know I shan't!"

"You must n't forget," returned Martha, "that father was compelled to consult his *resources* quite as much as he did his *taste* in coming down here. I know, and so does he, that it is a great sacrifice to him, and to all of us, in many ways; still I think that with a spontaneous love for nature one could easily make himself as happy here as any where else in the world. Just see the mist over on those hills! See what grotesque shapes it takes! We never saw such things in town. Once in a while we might see sunset on a church spire, or get a walk by fording through the mud in the streets; but never did we see, and never *shall* we see, such beautiful sunsets as we shall have here, nor wade through such mud as we used to have there. It's *clean* mud in the country, Mary!"

Her sister's face relaxed a little. "Clean mud!" she ejaculated.

"Yes, *clean*. Whatever you get in the fresh country, you may depend upon it, will be *wholesome*. As soon as it clears up again, you shall see how bracing and clear the air is. It's no more like what we used to breathe than—than—, Oh, just hear that bird in the birch coppice yonder! Who would think a bird could sing in such a storm as this? Poor little thing, I hope it won't get its death of cold by being out in this bad weather!"

"How very romantic all this is!" said Mary. "If I could only get in such a way now, going into ecstasies over every little bird, bug, and spider that flies, crawls, and spins, I don't doubt that I might make living here very agreeable. But unfortunately I don't happen to possess that faculty. So I must make up my mind to eke out the days the best way I can. They'll be long enough, I promise you."

"No they won't, sister," rejoined Martha, turning herself swiftly round twice on the floor of the piazza. "I'm going all about here myself, as soon as spring sets in, and father says that will be very soon, from present indications; just as soon as this storm goes away."

"I should be glad to know when that will be," said Mary.

"Oh; well, Mary, sometime or other, of course; don't be too impatient. But as soon as the ground gets dry, I mean to go out on the many excursions I have planned for the spring and summer; and I want you to go with me, too, for I know how much you will enjoy it. I'm going to hunt birds' nests, and count the eggs, and watch the growth of the little ones till they leave their homes in the grass and leaves. And the brooks, too; you know I was always perfectly charmed with the sight of a sweet

little brook, Mary. Well, I'm going to follow the brooks up and down, and become a very intimate friend with them all; and I shall want you to go with me always too. And what fine landscapes we can sketch with our pencils, and not be at the least trouble to find originals either! And the rocks and trees, and the meadows and lanes, and orchards, and woods—where *can* one find a greater variety of resources for enjoyment, dear sister, than right in a spot like this? I shall live two lives now where I lived but one before. And we must be so much the happier, too, all the time!"

Mary stood with folded arms, attentive to what her more contented sister was saying, and watching with a gloomy and unsatisfied countenance the drizzle and dripping of the spring rain. She said nothing more, however, perhaps not altogether sure that Martha had not really got the right of it. And at that moment Mr. Rivers himself came out where they were, and stood beside them.

"What a rain!" said he.

Sure enough—*what* a rain! A real, old fashioned, four-days, country rain! A soaking, sopping, drowning rain! A rain that all the time rained at least just so much, and a good part of the time a great deal more! A rain that suggested an odd fancy of a saturated sponge being held over your head, and of a million minute cells being squeezed—but never squeezed dry—of the contents of their little buckets of water!

House and hedge, garden and field, sky and earth—every thing wore about the same cast of expression; dull, leaden, and dead. A hypochondriac would have welcomed it as warmly as a starved man welcomes the hour of dinner. It was such a "spell of weather" as would please the whole army of blue-devils exactly. They would dance and skip, and squirm in the brain now, as

they never would know how at any other time. The best balanced minds could not, without an effort, repel the influence; and even the most romantic natures would be sure to get a little sapped and bedraggled in their golden plumage, by the somber fancies that brooded every where over them like a thick mist.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT OF THE BUSHES.

THE hired man had saddled the horse and brought him into the yard, where he stood proudly pawing up the dirt with his hoof. He was a new horse that Mr. Rivers had bought but a short time before of one of the farmers somewhere in the neighborhood; and being young, spirited, and handsome, he was just such a pretty creature as Martha would be most likely to pet. So as the man led him round to the back door, and the two sisters stood talking about him, Martha declared she would give him a name: "and Button it shall be," she added, holding out her hand to receive a caress she fancied he would be ready to give her for the compliment.

"Now be very careful that your Button doesn't run away with you, Mat," said the elder sister, assisting her into the saddle with her hand and shoulder.

"I wish you had consented to ride first," returned Martha. "I'm sure, I had much rather you would."

"Ah, that indeed, now! When you are thinking that *somebody's* neck is likely to be broken, you feel a little more willing that it should be mine than your own! No, I thank you: I must positively decline your kind offer. Pray, let me insist on your making the first experiment yourself."

Martha turned upon her a face of innocent surprise, and exclaimed, "Why, sister! You know I meant no such

thing! How cruel!" The man could not refrain from laughing aloud at the manner in which the elder sister turned back the invitation of the other upon herself.

"Well, well, Mat," broke out Mary, endeavoring to smooth down the wrinkles caused by her speech, "it will be soon enough for me to ride out, after your return. I'm in no particular worry to view the country to-day, and will obligingly believe every word you may feel disposed to report to me of the state of things. So cut up your little Button, and away with you!"

The horse laid his ears back close to his head, not wickedly so much as playfully, and commenced switching his long tail hither and thither, while Martha self-possessedly kept her seat and began to stroke his glossy neck with her hand. On his back, she looked like a picture of health and beauty. The blood freshly mantled her cheeks, from merely the inspiriting thoughts that danger raised in her brain; and her eyes glowed and sparkled with pleasure, in expectation of nothing but the beautiful evening ride she was going to have.

It was just at the close of a charming spring day, the sun still playing about the summits of the hills, gilding the wood-spires that shot up in serred rows from their soil, and throwing back over the lowland and the plain the reflection of its dying brilliancy. The evening air was bland and soft; just strong enough, thought the fair horseman, to be a little invigorating, and not so much heated as to become oppressive or enervating. It would heighten still more the color of the rider's cheeks, and excite to a yet pleasanter pitch the tone of her sympathizing spirits. She could hardly have chosen a finer time for her short excursion on horseback, and gave out that she was going to learn how to go about for the future unattended; "for," added she, gayly, "unless

"I do learn it, I am afraid I shall never be able to go at all!"

"Attendants are so very scarce," added her sister, "in this most charming retirement!"

"Ah, but you will come over to my opinion before a great while, Mary. You can't hold out very long. All you want is a horseback ride or two."

"Well, come," was the reply, "let us see you take your horseback ride! I'm very patiently waiting to see you get off."

"Anxious to get rid of me, possibly! Very well; here we go, then. Come, my little Button! Come up, Button!" And gracefully, but firmly, reigning him in, she started out of the yard on a slow and very agreeable canter.

The girl was a good horseman, and entertained not the first fear for her ability to keep her seat, in any emergency. The horse was a new one, to be sure, and she was quite unused to him; but she had unbounded confidence in herself, and that is the first and last requisite of good horsemanship. She carried a light riding whip in her hand, with the silky end of which she patted ever so gently the little horse's mane, while she talked continually to him almost as she would to a child. As her steed carried her away, she turned her face around just as she was going into the arched avenue of a wooded lane, and beheld her sister still standing in the yard, looking after her with an appearance of deep interest. Martha hastily waved her hand, spoke encouragingly to Button, and was in a moment lost in the winding aisle of the forest by-road.

As she got on, and as she felt her confidence in the horse and herself every moment more and more established, her interest in the natural objects around her engrossed nearly all her attention, and she fell into her

wonted habit of admiration and reverie immediately. Her eyes ran quickly up and down the moss-spotted stems of the trees, and lodged their arrowy glances in the thick clusters of the green leaves; or swept away with a single, far-reaching gaze over meadows and hillsides; scouring the whole country for objects of beauty.

She suffered her horse to walk after a while; and she thought he held down his head upon his breast, and arched his neck with such a proud prettiness, that he was perfectly satisfied with the character both of his companion and the excursion. The cool air in the glades fell refreshingly on her forehead and cheeks, and her spirits passed insensibly from a state of exhilaration to one of comparative repose.

The pictures such as her imagination had hitherto painted for her were now around her on every side; and she felt that the mere paintings had never yet, in truth, equaled the realities. It seemed to do her eyes good to get unbounded views of such beautiful landscapes. The little horse walked slowly on; the bridle rein hung loosely about his neck; the air was enticing; and the girl was in a dream—and a dream, too, on horseback!

She could not help thinking—as, indeed, all think who know any thing about it—that views from the saddle are brighter views, and fresher views, and broader, and far more beautiful than from almost any other situation; and the heightened spirits never fail to flush them with the warmth of their own coloring, and to impart to them the glowing life with which they are themselves overflowing full. Her enjoyment was as perfect as it was possible for any one's to be; indeed, she questioned if ever in her life she had been happier than she was at this moment. If Mary would but look at things as she did!—if Mary would only widen her sympathies a little—it would all

be as well for herself! And how very much more complete then would be her own happiness!

Down into a beautiful dell she slowly trotted, her face turned first to one side of the road and then to the other. It was a spot—she thought to herself—quiet enough for the fairies to hold their midnight revels in. The broad bands of green turf striped the road, and Button trotted evenly between them. She had gathered up the reins a little, though they still hung rather loosely over his neck, as if she would say to him in all candor and friendship—“Now you mustn’t play me false, Button. I put full confidence in you, you understand; be sure and do your very best for me this time, and you will find in me the truest of friends hereafter! You hear me, Button, don’t you?”

As if he really did hear her, he laid his small ears back close upon his head, switched the air briskly with his tail, and fell forthwith from a trot into quite a lively canter.

“Not too fast, Button! not too fast, sir! I want time to look about me a little, you know!” said she, reining him in somewhat. “Button, I like the scenery hereabouts, and I’m going to try to make you like it, too!”

Out from the forest path she emerged upon the broad and open plain, where the fading sunlight lay with a dying glory, gilding leaves, and grass, and rocks. The little brooks went singing along by the roadside, gurgling and gushing with a perfect joy. Squirrels began to chirp and chatter upon the gray stone walls, now racing along on the tops, and now hiding themselves for a moment over the other side, whisking their bushy tails in the fullness of delight. Birds were putting up their grateful evening chorals, their feathered throats swelling and ruffling with song.

If ever beauty was to be found anywhere, thought

Martha, surely here it was all around her. If nature anywhere was perfectly charming—throwing out her arms for one, as it were, smiling broadly and benignantly, blessing her children and asking to be blessed in return—surely it was now.

The girl watched as closely the changing hues of the clouds as she did the manifold pictures the landscape offered her; and her soul seemed to have put on ethereal wings, that bore her far, far beyond the atmosphere of sordid realities, and bathed itself in the resplendent colors that floated over the dome of the heavens. What poetry her nature possessed was excited now to its extreme limit of passionateness. What dreams had ever dawned on her soul's sight before, at this time seemed to clothe themselves with the attributes of a living and glowing reality. Oh, those evening clouds! those evening clouds! Grand, massy, and glorious! piled up as they were in battlements of gorgeous colors, with streamers sailing and swimming away from them all—rolling slowly hither and thither, like great billows, in the sea of clondless ether afar—showing mysterious cliffs and suggesting unfathomed deeps beyond, where only brightness and unbroken blue stretched away forever and forever—how they wrought in the soul of the enthusiastic girl, kindling her emotions to a warmth that was little less than a living ecstasy!

She spoke to herself, soliloquizing in such syllables as chanced to come to her lips, and all the time of the beauties that so charmed her. Forgetful of her situation, and thinking only of the scenes that enraptured her vision, she had thoughtlessly suffered the bridle to lie loosely over Button's neck again, leaving him to pursue the course that best pleased himself. It was a moderate gait, and such an one as assisted her much in her tranquil enjoyment. But the sudden report of a gun from very

near the roadside, in a small patch of chestnut wood, accompanied, too, with a vivid flash of fire, so started the little steed from his pleasant equanimity that he sprang with a wild and terrific bound from the road, almost throwing his rider from the saddle. Giving a loud snort, that betokened his intense affright, he switched his tail very swiftly two or three times, and set out the next instant on a dead and desperate run.

“Whoa, Button! steady, Button!” spake she, in as firm a voice as she could command, while she grasped the reins and drew them upon his mouth with all her might.

But every second that he ran he seemed to grow more and more unmanageable, as if his fright increased upon him continually. He tore away like the very wind. All that she could do, all she could say, had no more influence over him than the whistling of the air in his ears. Faster and faster he flew each moment, till the walls, and rocks, and trees all seemed running in one smooth line together. His hoofs rattled upon the turf and the gravel as if he scarcely allowed them time to strike the ground beneath him at all. His long and abundant mane streamed away from his neck, and his nostrils dilated frightfully. Like a wild horse of the prairies, he felt for once the full strength and freedom of his limbs.

As good a horseman as Martha knew herself to be, she nevertheless experienced the overwhelming and paralyzing sensations of fear. They crept coldly over her, in spite of her utmost exertions to keep them down. She tried to be calm and self-possessed; but there was something that shook her nerves, till she began to think she had no power more over them.

Her grasp on the bridle was firm and tight, but it seemed as if her hand had not strength left to check his

impetuous career. She could not even guide him. He had his head, and threw out his fore feet with a swift stretch that told the observer at a glance that the horse was a desperate runaway.

One moment the cheeks of the girl would be flushed with color, red and burning; and the next, they were as pale as whiteness itself. As she swept swiftly through the air, the wind shrieking even frightfully in her ears, cold chills crept over her, the dampness stood in the palms of her hands, and the strength slowly left her limbs. She knew too well how fearful a ride she was taking, and could clearly calculate the very few chances there were of her final escape in safety. Her heart almost ceased to beat; her pulses were still; and the blood quite curdled within her for terror. Still on dashed the frightened animal, heedless of bridle and bit, as if he were bent on rushing forward to his own destruction—on, on, on!

Her sensations now began to be indescribable. There was a swimming in her eyes and giddiness in her brain that, as she was borne along past walls and trees so swiftly, seemed almost to overwhelm her. To cry out would be worse than useless: for it could hardly be possible that any assistance would be near, and to frighten the animal still more would be the height of insane folly. So she merely held on firmly, though as for speaking a word to the horse then it was entirely out of her power. It was as if her blood was all on fire. It seemed to her that her nerves were every one wrought up to its highest tension, and that they tingled like very stings to the ends of her fingers. Her eyes rested on nothing, but all objects ran into one confused and continuous blur. She felt as if she were flying—swimming—sailing through the air, and her respiration every moment became more difficult. Oh, if she could but touch her foot to the

ground! If she could just break the monotony of this swift and continuous line of objects! She thought rapidly of her sister—of her father—of all her friends. She tried to think of herself—of where she was, and of what might be the ending of this fearful ride; but her mind was going round and round in the vortex of a whirlpool of fears; her thoughts were too swift even to be thoughts, or to take any distinct shape and direction. And the horse still bore her, with clatter of hoofs and recklessness of motion—on, on, on!

She finally reached a spot where the country road forked. If she could get him to the left he would be obliged to climb a long and precipitous hill; that much she could sufficiently collect her thoughts to understand. And she pulled with all her failing strength of hand upon the rein. But she might as well have pulled at a rope around an oak, so little heeded he the power that ought to have directed him. He tore along by the other road, and now Martha knew nothing of what was next to come. Her heart quite sunk within her.

Hardly had she gone on ten rods when the figure of something—she could not tell what—sprang forward from a clump of bushes near the roadside, and in a moment seemed to her to be hanging and dangling from the neck of her horse. For the first time since the beginning of her terrific race she uttered a low cry. The person who had managed with such success to catch at her horse's bridle now shouted to him with all the power of his lungs, dragging and pulling his head perseveringly downward to the earth. The horse shook, became irregular in his motions, trembled convulsively, and tried to rear on his hind feet. But the grasp of the stranger's hand upon the bit was like the hold of a vice. It could not be shaken off at all. It finally succeeded in breaking down the im-

petuosity of the runaway and bringing him to a perfect stand-still. Martha almost fell into his arms, while without proffering a syllable, he offered to help her from her dizzy seat in the saddle. She leaned heavily on his shoulder as he assisted her, and immediately sank down upon a rock that stood by the side of the road. So sudden a release from her fears took all her remaining strength away. The reaction from excessive fear to the calmness of perfect safety was too overwhelming.

Securing the horse to a tree at hand the stranger hastened to lend his assistance to the fainting girl; and, lifting her from her seat, he conducted her to a little run of water that fortunately was but a few paces off. There he bathed her temples with the cooling fluid, dipping it up in the palm of his hand, and supporting her still with his arm. It was with a feeling of profound joy, therefore, that he heard her exclaim at length in a low voice—"I am better now! Oh, what an escape!"

He thought that upon so fair and expressive a face his eyes had not for a long, long time feasted themselves.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. HOLLIDAY.

As soon as Martha declared herself sufficiently recovered of her strength to return, she rose and thanked the stranger for his kindness in words few but full of meaning, and looked at her horse as if she yet labored in some great perplexity. Understanding, at a glance almost, what the cause of her trouble was, her companion asked her if she could venture to ride back again. She was much too weak to walk, that she felt in reality; but it would be a thousand times easier to walk even twice the distance than to think of riding the excited runaway back again. Accordingly she proceeded slowly along the roadside, while her brave and gallant rescuer led the horse beside her, alternately talking to her of the frightful risk she had run, and trying to soothe the unquiet of the animal.

Now and then she sat down upon a rock or a tree-stump to refresh herself again, and gather additional strength to go on; when he stood by her and said all he could to revive her spirits until she got up and went on again.

The stranger was quite a young looking man, not too tall, rather slender, and with a countenance that, though by no means pale, was nevertheless marked with the lineaments of habitual thoughtfulness. The vitality and the repose were just closely enough allied in his appearance

to bespeak a perfect and well-balanced character. He had a large and very dark gray eye, full of expression, and glancing quick rays of intelligence around him. His forehead was broad and ample, and covered with a perspiration that had broken out profusely upon his exertions to check the horse's headlong career; and wiping it away continually with his handkerchief while he took his hat from his head, he seemed, in the eyes of the grateful girl, to be veritably handsome; a term not often applied with either taste or propriety to those of the male sex, but in this individual case most certainly deserved and in nowise misemployed.

As they walked on, their conversation branched off from accidents to pleasanter topics. Martha's self-possession visibly increased, and her spirits went up at once; and thereupon she fell into a rapid and sketchy narration of her inner experience on first removing from the heart of town-life to the seclusion of the country. She gave up, with an innocency of manner that to the young man was indescribably captivating, all the feelings that had marked the epoch of her removal hither, and naïvely expressed her present desire to make herself and all around her besides perfectly happy. She spoke charmingly, too, of the scenery, alluding to each individual item that went to make up its beautiful aggregate, and asked him with a countenance flushed with nothing but earnestness, if he were not as great an admirer as herself.

When it became apparent to both of them how much in accord their deeper and finer sympathies were, and that neither need hunger for companionship in the neighborhood of the other, a fine electrical thrill seemed to shoot simultaneously through their hearts, and they secretly felt that a real and lasting acquaintance had begun. So mysterious and so subtle oftentimes are the influences

that lead spirit to spirit, and link soul with soul in bonds that promise nothing less than bliss.

The stranger gentleman announced his name to be Mr. Holliday. He lived in a small house perhaps a half mile from the humble little seat of Mr. Rivers, at the end of a short lane that conducted you back from the road a little way, in a nest that was hedged about with lilacs and climbing roses.

Mr. Holliday was an exceedingly quiet man, for so young an one, following along his own course in the world without questioning or interruption. He had been a resident near Draggledew Plain but about three years, during which time it would be difficult for any one of all the people roundabout to say that they were really acquainted with him, or knew aught of the real elements and shades of his nature. They would tell you, to be sure, that such a man as Mr. Holliday lived a little out of the village, in a house by himself, with only a house-keeper; and they would be pretty sure to tell you beside, that he was a young man of very retired habits, much given to writing and reading, but still more to fishing; and still further, that they perfectly knew all there was worth knowing, or to be known by any one, about him, and that he was what some people called an author.

Yes, an author! A young writer, who, with small means but an iron resolution, and with a love for nature and the beautiful that colored and shaped all the other feelings of his heart, struggles bravely for years with fortune, and is finally admitted to share the sweet and satisfactory pleasure of her broadest smiles. Such there are, and such labor in the midst of those who know them not. They live, as it were, in a world of their own, in the atmosphere of which they who pretend to deride them—those coarser natures that can laugh only because they

can not understand—could never so much as exist. Supporting himself and his small establishment by means of his pen alone, of course he was but one of the humble ones in life, at least for the present, who do not trust themselves to the current and the uproar, but half hide in quiet nooks and are content with the little fame their unbroken labors may happen to bring them. He felt that as yet his career was hardly begun. What he had hitherto produced was put forth without the open authority of his own name, and so he suffered himself still to remain in obscurity, though not a whit the less contented on that account.

Mr. Arthur Holliday was a man of some twenty-five years, or in that neighborhood, and had thus far helped himself along in the world. His talent, whatever in popular estimation it might be, was all native to him; the education of it had been the steady work of his own industry and resolution. Setting his face as a flint sternly against the seductiveness of fleeting and unsatisfactory pleasures, such as captivate almost at first view the unsteady hearts of young men of promise generally, he looked to one single object in life, toward which he bent his steps with a steadfastness of purpose that could never know total, even if partial, defeat.

So he sat in his quiet and humble little cot in the lilacs and rose-bushes, and day after day, and night upon night, studied the few authors that were his favorites, or toiled in the continuous and exhausting efforts of composition. Not a day was suffered to pass but it brought along with it new accessions either to his stores or his discipline. He toiled with a perseverance that would be satisfied with nothing short of success. His soul itself was in his purpose, and he could not fail to reach some point at last that must satisfy him. He was at his table often-

times, in summer weather, before others were to be heard stirring anywhere around him, scratching away at his manuscripts, and adding sheet to sheet for the rigid revision of a future day. Sometimes he sat over his books the day through, buried in the studies and the reading that helped to furnish him with the means to go onward.

Or when a good warm wind drew up into the little valley, and so over the plain, from the southern gateway in the hills, he shouldered his rod, furnished his pocket with provisions for the excursion, and went hunting the brooks clear to their fountains, or back again to the place where he started, for the largest trout that would suffer themselves to be ensnared by him. His success in these charming little forays into the sweetest recesses and hiding places of nature was proverbial throughout the neighborhood; as a fisherman, or rather, as an angler, he bore a reputation—though in all likelihood he knew it not—second to none the country round.

Talking of this thing and that, and trying to make his fair companion forget as far as possible the frightful scene through which she had just gone, he walked on by her side, every moment growing more and more interested in her, and more and more confirmed in the esteem he had at the first moment of speaking with her conceived. Yet there stole now and then a dull shadow over his feelings, that made itself plain even upon his countenance also. Once or twice he arrested himself in the act of casting suspicious, if not fearful glances upon her, as if he were anxious about some revelation that might suddenly be made. There was a mystery in his manner, when it was such, that none could have possibly fathomed; unless, perhaps, it had been either Martha or some other of her family friends. He was chiefly fearful lest an untoward revelation might occur. It seemed to be this as much as

any thing; and if not this, then there is no telling what it was.

Coming along to where the lane first began to track into the wood, they met Mary, who had become somewhat alarmed for the safety of her sister, and walked on to see if she could meet her returning home. Her face expressed the deepest surprise, on seeing her on foot, and especially on seeing a stranger walking beside her and leading her horse. Instinctively she put up both hands.

"Don't be too much alarmed, sister," called out Martha to her; "it wasn't exactly an accident, but it came very near being one."

"Thrown?" asked Mary, her eyes wide open with surprise.

"Oh, no, indeed! Only a runaway. You see Button and I hav'n't become sufficiently acquainted with one another yet. But I hope this state of things won't continue long."

"Runaway!" exclaimed Mary. "Did he *run* with you?"

"Yes; and had n't it been for the courageous and very timely interference of this gentleman here, you would hardly have got the account as you now do from my own lips."

Her sister now gained her side, and, making her lean on her arm for support, begged her to narrate how it all happened, and how she was rescued safe and alive.

"It was only by stopping the horse," replied the young man, quite modestly.

"That indeed, sir," said Mary. "But I should hardly imagine it to be such a very easy task to check the course of a furious runaway."

"Nor is it, either," added Martha, bestowing a look of gratitude on her deliverer. "I was going on, I knew

nothing where. Control over my horse I had utterly lost. He heeded my pulling on his bit as little as he did the words I tried to speak to him. Such a mad race I never rode before, and I am confident I do not wish to ride again. Just at the moment when I thought I must certainly fall from my horse, and when the strength seemed to have failed me altogether, I saw some one spring suddenly from the roadside, and the next I knew was that my headlong career was brought to a stop! My horse plunged and reared to get away, but the grasp that was upon him would not permit that. And to this gentleman alone, dear sister, am I indebted for my life to-day."

Mary gave him a look of pure gladness.

"I am sure, sir," said she, "we do not know how to thank you enough. You have touched, beside the feeling of gratefulness within us, that of deep and real joy. Let me thank you again and again, sir, for your courageous service. And now"—they had finally reached the gate at the yard—"let us insist on your coming in with us."

He excused himself at once in a few words, promising to call very soon again and learn how speedy was Martha's recovery from her fright; and lifting his hat to them both with a grace that was inborn to him, he turned and pursued his solitary way down the road homeward.

On that road what strange fancies entered his head, while faces equally strange crept slowly into his heart! The face of that beautiful girl—so full of innocence, so fresh, so glowing, so animated with her perfectly frank and free expression—quite captivated his feelings, and broke down the barriers of his judgment altogether. On his pages would that sweet face live again. In his thoughts he knew it would dance till they could gather themselves around no other objects than that. What

might come of it all—what might be the result to himself, to his plans, and purposes, and pursuits—he dared not once stop to think. It was in a dream almost that he wandered now; all brought to him so suddenly that he could have foreseen nothing of it a short time before.

The father of the girls was greatly surprised when he learned of the escape of his younger child from a cruel death, and declared many times that he would never forget the one who had rendered him so signal a service, at the risk, too, of his own life. His gratitude overflowed, seeming to be even more abundant than that of either of his daughters; albeit, it is certainly due to Martha, at least, to say that her feeling was far too deep for any thing like a fair, outward expression.

Mr. Rivers had never heard of Mr. Holliday before. Was he a young man? And what was his employment? Was he poor, like the rest of us around here? Martha answered his questions only the best way she could. She told him just what Mr. Holliday had himself communicated, and there was obliged to stop. Mr. Rivers promised forthwith to find out more without further delay; and informed his daughters that they had made at least one acquaintance, since their arrival in the country, that deserved to be carefully perpetuated to the end of their days. Their father was at times an enthusiastic man, and where he liked, he liked as few other men could. And sitting that evening in his slippers, the little country parlor being pleasantly lighted, he made his children once more the happy children they had been long before pecuniary misfortunes—if they really were such—had overtaken them.

The little seat where lived the Rivers family was not on that night any more enviable in its appearance than the snug nest where was dreaming the young student and

author. With his head on his hand, and his elbow leaned upon the table, he sat in the pleasant web of his dream, blowing fanciful bubbles of every kind through the hours of the spring evening.

Had not his exertion in checking the horse been too much for him?

CHAPTER VIII.

A MORNING CALL.

IN good season the next morning Arthur Holliday set out for the house of the one he had rescued, eager to know what effect her fright might have produced on her. He thought, as he followed the winding and narrow road along, that the day had an unusual promise, and that the sun shone forth with a new brilliancy. The woods and the fields wore liveries that seemed hitherto unobserved by him. Life was every where present, and birds, beasts, and insects were awake with the dawn of a fresh joy.

When he came in sight of the low house and broad piazza of Mr. Rivers his heart half misgave him, and unconsciously the old fears stole over him; but making a desperate effort to control them, he walked with a quick and firm tread across the yard, and pulled at the bell. Martha had espied him coming up, and therefore went to wait upon him; possibly to let him see at the first glance that she had quite recovered from the shock given her nerves the evening before.

"Good-morning," he saluted, as she opened the door. "I was anxious to know that you were well this morning, and have done myself the pleasure of calling on you for that purpose."

Martha blushed, thanked him, and told him that she thought no more of the accident at all than of the great

risk run by the one who so courageously rescued her; and asked him into the parlor. He complied with her wish; and immediately he found himself seated in a long room, or rather in two rooms thrown together in one, with a low ceiling, and the walls hung with a few charming pictures, chiefly engravings; while opposite him was that same sweet face that had looked out in all his dreams of the night before.

They chatted a few minutes together, when Martha excused herself to call her sister, and her father and mother. Mary entered, renewing to the stranger her thanks of the previous evening, but adding little more. Aside from this particular circumstance, she could think of associating no other one with him that would be likely at all to interest her.

When Martha introduced her parents they betrayed their pleasure at making the young man's acquaintance in every way possible. Mr. Rivers apologized for not having first called on him, and expressed to him over and over the gratitude that moved him. The single act that saved to him his daughter's life, he considered one for which he could never make adequate return. He characterized it as an act of the truest courage and heroism. And in all that he said his wife concurred most heartily.

"It was no more than what the common feelings of humanity would prompt," he modestly explained. Still that view of it made the hearts of the family none the less grateful.

Mr. Rivers at length fell to conversing with his visitor of the scenery and the country round about, asking him his opinion or his fancy on matters of taste, or comparing his experience with him respecting life and labor in that particular locality.

"You have resided here some time, I suppose," said

Mr. Rivers. "At least, long enough to know what's going on around you."

"Three years and upward," was the reply; "yet in all that time I confess, sir, that my personal acquaintance here has amounted to but little. I spend a great many hours in the day, and a great many days in the month, out of doors, and there I manage to get a peep at about all the out-door life there is to be seen. Every body seems to know me; so of course I am supposed to know every body. As for the rest, I can only say that I live a quiet and secluded life here, and that my good old house-keeper in all likelihood knows as little of me as the rest."

"The country is well adapted to your pursuits, you find," Mr. Rivers went on, his interest increasing naturally.

"No spot can be better for me than this one right here. Its many influences have seemed to grow into my mind. When I labor, my thoughts all get their shape, their coloring, or their vividness and warmth from the associations that are linked in with my residence here. These influences are silent and secret, every one of them; but they are no less powerful on that account. The mind is a something over which we after all have but little control. It possesses us, and not we it. That idea is a fallacy at best that teaches us that we have only to furnish food for our intellectual nature, and then suffer our thoughts to go a-grazing upon it. It is not so; and it is just because it is not so that I feel my thoughts oftentimes led whither other powers may wish to lead them, and colored by processes that, to say the least, seem utterly unaccountable."

"I should much admire to peruse one of your books, sir," said Mr. Rivers. "If you will have the kindness to send one over to us, we warrant you full justice shall be

done its pages ; and when I next go into town, I will obtain such of yours as you may have published. We must manage to keep up, somehow, with what is being done in the world, even if we do live so far back here."

The young man smiled only, acknowledging the compliment by a low and graceful bow.

"There are enough objects around us here," he observed, "to interest if not to instruct one, if one has but a wish to be interested and instructed. People are more homely to be sure ; but homeliness of manners is by no means to be confounded with rudeness ; they are quite different things. Because all can not lodge under crowded city roofs, it does not follow that those who go into country cottages are necessarily the inferior ones. Or if but a few out of the entire mass rush to the close alleys of the town, it is by no means certain that the vast remainder would go if they had but the opportunity. In fact, country people may possess all the amenities and intelligence, and refinement of those who possess the most. Why not, pray ?"

"That's true ! that's true !" exclaimed Martha, in one of her irresistible impulses. "Mary, I want you to hear this !"

"Mr. Holliday is not projecting a lecture particularly for me, I trust ?" said her sister, in a voice much too languid to stand up under the charge of affectation.

"Why, Mary," returned her sister, "how you talk !"

"Oh, no, indeed, said the young man ; "I had no such thoughts as that, nor in truth do I see how the subject in hand could trouble any one, if treated in a truthful and candid manner. Excuse me if I have—"

"You have not, sir, you have not," interrupted Mary.

"Why, what do you mean ?" asked Martha, looking a little confused, and gazing straight in her sister's face.

"Fol-de-rol! Fol-de-rol!" exclaimed Mr. Rivers himself, eager to engage his guest in conversation again. "As you were saying, Mr. Holliday: um!—um!—a—"

"Yes, sir, as I was saying—it is not of necessity a disparagement to a person to live among country scenes, or even in the midst of country people."

"No—no—no; that it is n't," broke forth Mr. Rivers.

"I speak not from any special experience of my own, that can exactly be laid down by the side of that of others," he continued; "I know what I do simply from a habit I have of analyzing my own feelings and thoughts on such a subject. I understand that the human heart is susceptible to some of the subtlest influences, and that they reach it not less from objects and scenes in the midst of rustic quietudes, than from those beheld within corporation limits. In fact, refining influences are by no means local or exclusive. They are to be found every where; as much in a place like this, and more to some natures here, as in a city's borders. Towns concentrate what lies more widely scattered beyond their reach. Yet there is as much downright happiness to be had outside of them as in them, for me I confess a great deal more; and I have tried both."

"And for me, too," added Martha. "The open, sunny country's the place for rational enjoyment."

"Then I fancy you must have enjoyed yourself very highly," said her sister, "while taking your horseback airing last evening; for upon my word you had the whole open country before you to go whither you would!" and upon this she laughed as if she were making a real good time of it.

"Not to go whither I would, exactly," pleasantly returned Martha. "If I had had that liberty, I should certainly have chosen a different route from the one I took—"

"And so not fallen in accidentally with Mr. Holliday?" added her father.

Mary looked at her sister, and had half a mind naughtily to say, "Mat, what are you blushing so for?"

"It's a happy accident," said Mr. Holliday, meaning nothing but a compliment by it, "that brought my humble self within the circle of your acquaintance."

"A country acquaintance, too!" added Mrs. Rivers, with a smile.

After further conversation in this way, Mr. Rivers asked his guest if he would not like to go over his humble grounds with him; to be sure there was little else there but nature, and there would be likely to be little else for a long time to come; yet he would be glad to show him how he meant finally to content himself here. So they strolled out on the piazza, and through the gate, and over the garden, and into the orchard, and so on down the little lane that divided the kitchen-garden and the house from the farm.

All the way, Mr. Rivers told of his own plans for slowly improving and beautifying his rustic place, and of the hopes and happiness that he cherished so ardently there. In few words he sketched the outline of his life to his young auditor, and closed by narrating that he was left just where he had begun the world thirty years before. "Out of all I ever could boast of possessing, and I never did boast overmuch, I think," said he, "I saved just nothing."

"Nothing!" instinctively exclaimed Mr. Holliday.

"Nothing at all. You wonder, then, how I have the moderate possessions I do; let me tell you that I hold them simply as a sort of certificate of character from my creditors. They have generously provided, when I otherwise should have been on the world; and for their pro-

vision, whatever it might be, I am by all considerations bound to be grateful. I believe in gratitude, Mr. Holliday—I believe in gratitude, sir; and let me stop to thank you over again for your noble conduct in releasing my dear daughter from her danger yesterday.”

“Oh, sir—”

“I know you don’t want me to say any thing about it; so I won’t. Yet I feel no less grateful for it all, you understand. It’s a debt I can’t seem to discharge, as I feel that I have done by my other debts. But as I was going to tell you, Mr. Holliday: I try to feel as happy here as I ever did any where; and I really believe I’ve got hold of the true feeling.”

“Indeed, I do not doubt it, sir. Such a thing is not so very difficult to attain, if one but puts himself at first in the right position.”

“That’s it—that’s it. The fact is, Mr. Holliday, since I first began to put down my resolution seriously on this subject, as a man should do, I’ve become quite a philosopher. I find myself busy with subjects that never troubled me before. You will say that the country is a good place for philosophizing?”

“Grand. The very best. It’s quite my own experience, sir.”

“Well, then, as I get deeper into my system, I shall without doubt understand every thing the better. My philosophy is, just at this time, contentment. That single word, I believe, will comprise it all. There’s the real happiness to be got in that; and what more are we all after? What more are we after, I should like to know?”

“Nothing more,” ventured to answer the young man.

“I know that it’s not the life my family have been accustomed to lead; but does that go to show that it’s not

a life in which they may find the wholest and most wholesome enjoyment? I think not. I took you round this way, just to show you the little place I call my farm. It's about large enough to make a man determined to be contented—perfectly contented; and that's just enough. Here I shall try and reap my harvests, and enjoy myself with the passing year. Perplexities of business will never interrupt my quietude, nor threaten the happiness of my little family. I hope to find my neighbors as well disposed as I think I am myself, and, above all, Mr. Holliday, I shall expect as much of your company as you can possibly give us. We will try and make you enjoy yourself in our circle, if you're not hard to be suited."

The young man assured him that that was his last failing, and responded to his invitation with much cordiality.

When they entered the front yard again Mr. Holliday was struck with the simple beauty that characterized the place; perhaps it seemed far more charming to him, now that he was in possession of the golden key that unlocked the secret of the charm. He felt that here was a family with whom he might have many a pure sympathy in common; where he might come and not find all he said and did misinterpreted; around whose circle, although even unconsciously to themselves, he might fling associations of the most endearing and delightful character.

The young ladies, as well as their mother, presented urgent requests to the author to call on them often, hoping he might find it agreeable for him to do so. He promised all that his tongue allowed him, and took his leave at that. Time might ripen their acquaintance. New ideas might sprout in the garden of their sociality. Matters might change a good deal. Hearts might finally open. He knew not but he might be the missionary who was to change the direction of Mary's thoughts regarding rural

life, and bring her out bright at last on the side of her fair sister, Martha.

And Martha's face again came directly before his eyes while he walked slowly over the shaded country road. She seemed to smile—to speak. He smiled in return. And then the shadow of that fear—that strange and indescribable fear—dragged its slow length across his heart, and the sweet illusion—face and features, smile and syllables—was utterly gone. It was like a cloud coming between the earth and the sun. It would soon be gone; yet it had been there. And even the recollection of that troubled him.

As soon as he reached his little cot he entered his study, and there buried himself in the thoughts that crowded upon him. His housekeeper had called him thrice already, and still he seemed to know nothing what she meant by her assiduity, nor what it was all for.

CHAPTER IX.

KIT AND HIS CROW.

GABRIEL stole out into the yard one pleasant morning, and began to amuse himself with the poultry that kept company with Mr. Martin Nubbles's family. In the feathered crowd were to be found geese, ducks, hens, and turkeys, besides a few of those very disagreeable creatures (to many persons) called guinea-hens.

While he was busily engaged in counting them all over, and looking about the premises and wondering if every body else kept their fowls in no better a place than that used by Mr. Nubbles, he saw a tame crow hobbling along up to him that began to cry out with wide-open mouth, as if for something to eat. Gabriel of course gave this black personage all his attention.

"Here, Jack," called he, stooping down and reaching out his hand. "Jack, come here!"

The crow seemed to understand at a glance that the boy was not his master, and after he had advanced a few steps further he cocked up his head and winked slyly with a single eye, as much as to say to him, "Where's Kit? You're not Kit! Don't think to fool me so easy!"

Gabriel kept talking to the sable bird, and the bird stood on one leg and listened to him patiently. If ever the manner of a crow expressed any thing, that of this crow most plainly indicated that he had no special objec-

tion that he was aware of to making the acquaintance of Gabriel, and that he would stand on one leg awhile and hear what he had got to say for himself. Now and then he dropped his head, perhaps reflectively, and picked up a chip with his long bill; or he turned over the other side of his head to the boy, and winked with a fresh energy with the other eye.

At length Gabriel reached forward to catch him; he thought within himself that even the sympathy of a tame crow was better than no sympathy at all, and that there might be such a thing as his winning it to himself. The crow took fright at this sudden movement, and giving a hoarse "caw, caw, caw," flapped his broad black wings, and sailed up to the top of a post that helped hold up the yard fence.

"Here! what're ye doin' to my crow? What do ye want of Jack, ye little pauper?" instantly cried out a voice that too vividly suggested the approaching figure of Kit. "Jest let that crow alone!" said he, now appearing in sight, and brandishing his arm threateningly.

"I hav'n't touched him," murmured Gabriel, rising slowly to his feet, and regarding his tormentor with inexpressible disgust.

"Had n't touched him!" repeated Kit, sullenly, while his round moony face grew redder and redder. "Then what did he fly away for? what made him holler so, then?"

Gabriel would not answer. He hardly thought it required of him that he should enter into ornithological science so deeply as to attempt an explanation of the bird's motive for crying out "caw—caw" just when he wished to.

"Come, now," said Kit, moving up to him, "you hit him!"

"I did no such thing," replied Gabriel.

"Don't tell me you did n't, now, for I ain't a-goin' to be contradicted! You hit him, I tell ye; an' I'll hit you! Take that!"

Thereupon the calfy boy struck Gabriel a heavy blow across his stomach that nearly knocked the breath out of his body. As soon as he had successfully accomplished this feat he turned and ran valiantly for the house, calling out to his mother for assistance all the way. Gabriel caught hold of a bush at hand to prevent his falling to the ground, and gave a long and deep groan.

When Kit reached the house he narrated to his mother how that Gabriel—that miserable little pauper—had tried to kill his crow by striking him with a stick, and how he had fallen afoul of him when told that he must let the bird alone, and would, in all probability, have killed him but for his precipitate retreat to the house; and he besought his mother to go out and take up the cudgels in his defense immediately.

She happened to be standing at the long wooden sink washing the dishes; but at once dropping what she had in her hands, and stripping down the greasy dishwater from her arms, she muttered something about their family's being overrun and turned inside-out by paupers, and rushed out, like the Amazon she was, to the scene of the difficulty.

Gabriel was sitting down upon a log, as she came up, breathing heavily and moaning for assistance. His face was very pale, and the tears were running down his cheeks. He cast up a look of patient supplication to his mistress, and would have said something to her had she allowed him; but rushing upon him with the ferocity of an infuriated bear whose single cub has been slaughtered before her eyes, she grabbed him by the narrow collar of his jacket, just in the back of his neck, and dragged him,

unresisting and uncomplaining, over chips, logs, stones, and brush-heaps, straight across the yard into the house.

When she found she had him securely there, she set about her usual pastime of boxing his ears, shaking him roughly up and down in his chair, and "hitting him a clew" now and then—as she quite elegantly expressed it—over his diminutive legs. She went at it this time like a real fury. She acted as if she meant to make a final job of it, if she could, and so get the poor little wretch out of her way altogether.

And where was Kit? what was he doing all this time? Ah! there he stood just behind the outer door, peering round the edge of it to see if his mother "gave it to the young rebel good," and occasionally exclaiming in a loud whisper—"That 's it, mother! that 's it! I 'd lick him if I was in your place!" The face of the valorous youth had become, through his continued excitement, of the color of a bed of pinks. He swelled up at his fat throat like a frog beginning to whirr. His eyes protruded, and glared about on every object that was within the range of his vision. As the blows fell thick and fast on the persecuted boy, he kept chuckling and laughing, and growing redder continually.

Mr. Nubbles had gone away. It was well, perhaps, that he had, else Gabriel's position might have been even less endurable, if that were possible, than it was.

When Mrs. Nubbles thought that the boy might have got enough, although she had no means of judging except by the subsidence of her hasty passion, she left off beating, and took to scolding him. This was her usual method of completing her administrations of punishment; what, in the graphic language of her son Christopher, was termed "topping off."

At him, therefore, with her tongue she went, hammer

and tongs, as they say. It seemed as if she could scarcely keep her hands off of him, either. Now she walked close to the chair in which she had seated him, brandishing her fist in his face; and now she clutched and grabbed at imaginary objects of hatred in the air, as if she would like to tear out every spear of hair that grew in his head.

"My Christopher!" was what she said, but only a small part of it, however. "To think on it! Beating my own boy till he can't hardly stan'! Trying to kill him, yes, to commit a murder on him, and would have done it, too, if I had n't come and saved him jest as I did! A pretty state of things, I really think! A fine kind of a prospect, when I must be a lookin' out all the time to see my own son layin' dead right before me. A fine kind of prospect, I sh'd really think!"—and here she stopped a moment to get her breath again.

Kit walked proudly across the floor once or twice, exactly before Gabriel, making much exertion to insult and bully him once more in this time of his mental and bodily distress. Gabriel had done shedding tears, and looked only sadly upon the floor, not even daring to meet the eyes of his enemies. There was a great deal on his heart that he would have been so thankful to relieve himself of; but had there been any one there to reach out his tenderer sympathies to his own, he would have been sure to burst into a fit of weeping that would have choked articulation. Poor Gabriel! not so much as one friend in the midst of such a grievous suffering!

"You'll have to go away from here, young man," went on Mrs. Nubbles, coming down gradually from passion to protestation simply, "for I ain't a-goin' to live so—there! Mr. Nubbles 'd no sort o' business to bring you here in the fust place; but as long 's he has, why you must git along with me the best way you can. I've

got no words to waste on sich sort of bein's, and 't ain't at all likely that I shall waste 'em on you. A word and a blow, and a blow fust—is what' you 'll git here ; you' ll git it of me, I can tell you !”

Gabriel continued to look down on the floor with the same sad expression as before. A more thoroughly friendless person, as far as looks went, it would be difficult to find. He thought of his mother, and of her last words to him ; when he stood at her bedside in the old poor-house—she holding his hand within her own thin hand—and looked upon his pale and wasted features, and heard her syllables of deep and undying affection for him. He ran over once more in his thoughts her oft-repeated injunctions that bade him ever be gentle, and truthful, and noble ; and to scorn the meannesses of those who behaved from motives lower than these. And then as he brought his mind forward to the realities that hemmed him in on every side, his heart almost sank within him, and the tears stole unbidden from his eyes.

He was suddenly started from his melancholy reverie again by the shrill voice of his cruel mistress.

“Now 't you're here,” said she, “you shall make yourself useful, at any rate. Do you know where 'bout's them new folks live that moved into town a few weeks ago ?”

Gabriel hesitated.

“Over aerost them lots yender, and then on that other road to the village,” she added. “I want you to go over there. Their names is Rivers. You can inquire for Mr. Riverses folks ; and when you see 'em, ask 'em if they've engaged all their butter for this summer. Can you do that arrant, think ?”

He meekly answered that he would try, and right glad too would he be to try any thing, so that he could be respited even for an hour from his present state of suffering.

“Wal, git your cap on your head, then,” said she, “and let’s *see* you try! Start yourself off as fast as ye can. And mind another thing, now; jest keep your eyes about you, will ye, when you git there, and see what sort o’ folks they air, and what they live like. I want to know if they’ve got very han’sum furniture; and how the kitchen looks, and all the other places; and I want you to see all you can and tell me of it when you come back. Now jest see how good a story you can bring. Off with ye! But be careful not to say to ’em what I wanted to know so badly: it’s the summer butter that I’m anxious to git word on so particular!”

Receiving such dubious and puzzling instructions, he put on his hat, told her in answer to her question whether he knew what he was going after, that he believed he did, and hurried across the yard to the road. He heard Kit’s disagreeable voice, as he reached the gate, calling out insultingly to him, “Had to ketch it, old feller, did n’t ye? Mother give it to ye good that time, did n’t she? Next time then, try to kill my crow!”

Gabriel did not demean himself by answering his taunts. If he had any feeling that he thoroughly knew to be at the bottom of all the others, it was a feeling of the profoundest pity for the poor creature, more body than soul, that took such a delight in destroying the peace of one weaker than himself.

The air on the old road did good service for the boy, for it fanned his temples and cooled his heated lips; and its invigorating and renovating spirit stole through his senses into his heart. The boughs of the trees that hung over the chestnut rail fences, threw down pleasant patches of shadow on the ground, making a sort of mosaic pavement beside the road, and inviting him further within the dim recesses of their shelter.

After walking and wandering about for some time, he descried, on another road, the house he thought must be the one to which he had been sent. It looked so lovely to him in that situation, its chimneys rose so modestly from its cottage roof, the piazza and the shrubbery were so inviting to his wearied and lacerated feelings, that he hailed the sight with a heartfelt joy. Oh, if he could but live in such a spot himself, and be forever quit of the entire Nubbles family!

He walked across the yard to the side door, and found it open. Martha happened to be near, and espied him. So small a boy, so pitiful an one in his whole appearance, and a boy so sad-faced, if not sad-hearted, excited her sympathy at once. She approached and kindly accosted him, asking him who he was, and where he came from.

While he was telling his story, Mary joined her sister at the door, and together they began to ply him with their questions. To their inquiry where he lived, he had answered "with Mr. Nubbles;" and when they asked him where *he* lived, he told them "over on Worrywitch Hill."

"But where was Worrywitch Hill?" They had never heard of that place before.

He described the locality as well as he could, and the kind of characters that dwelt there, human and inhuman.

"Mr. Nubbles!" said Mary, laughingly, "What an odd name!"

"And Kit Nubbles!" added Martha. "That is the best of all."

Gabriel wondered what they were laughing at.

"But have you always lived there?" said Martha, seeing at a glance that there must be a story about it, somewhere. "You are not Mr. Nubbles's boy, are you?"

It was a very modest "No, ma'am," that he answered.

There was that in the face of the sad-hearted boy, that

appealed to her sympathies directly. She read in the lines of his features a tale that only those quick and living in their sympathies, like herself, can read in such hurried glances.

"Then whose boy are you?" she continued. Her sister with folded arms, looked with manifest interest on the scene.

"My mother is dead," said he, dropping his eyes to the ground. "She died in the Epping poor-house; and I went to live with Mr. Nubbles."

The silence of the girls betrayed their emotion.

"And how long have you been there?" finally put Martha again.

"Only a few weeks, ma'am," said Gabriel.

"Do you like to live over there on that hill with such a frightful name?" pursued she.

He hesitated.

"Why, Mat!" exclaimed her sister. "You should n't ask the child such questions. Perhaps he would n't like to tell you."

"Oh, well then; he need n't, certainly, if he does n't wish to. I do not mean to wound his feelings at all, sister."

"I'd rather not tell," said he, and looked up into his interrogator's face with an expression of such innocent intelligence as was absolutely charming. Martha saw it all in that single look, and forbore to pursue her inquiries any further.

After a while Gabriel mustered courage to perform his ostensible errand; the real one he had absolutely suffered to pass out of his mind.

The sisters made him come in and sit down in the little breakfast-room; and while Martha kindly gave him a good, generous slice of her best cake, Mary had gone

to make due inquiries in reference to the supplies of summer butter.

Gabriel could not well avoid noticing the various marks of partiality that Martha showed him, nor the compassionate attention she manifested. He loved her already, if only for her sweet face, that seemed to radiate happiness all around her. He felt, in only this momentary acquaintance, that in her heart he might find a refuge. Oh, that he might be permitted at some time to pour out all his griefs to her, and feel himself secure in the warm embrace of her sympathies!

Mary returned with her mother, who, after sundry precautionary inquiries of a general character, sent word back to the boy's mistress that a sample of her butter, together with her terms, might be returned as soon as convenient. Mrs. Rivers herself likewise took much notice of Gabriel, putting him sundry questions, which was her mode of expressing sympathy for one in so destitute and friendless a condition.

Martha, kind and thoughtful Martha, followed him to the gate, plucking two or three early garden flowers for him as she went along, and telling him in a low voice that he must not cry any more. He looked up at her as if to ask how she knew he had been crying; and instantly—so strong and so subtle was the magnetism of her pitying look, the tears stole into his eyes again.

The reader will be no wise astonished or disappointed to learn that Mrs. Nubbles threw the flowers Gabriel brought with him into the fire forthwith, and that after getting the butter returns—she got no other—she set Gabriel about his old avocations near herself, with stimulated energy of purpose.

CHAPTER X.

THE WORTH OF A RELATION.

IF you are perfectly willing, dear reader, I would like to carry you back about five years.

At that time a young man from the country somewhere, Duncan Morrow by name, was sauntering thoughtfully along the streets of the city, feasting his hungry eyes on the great variety of sights that greeted him on every hand—some of the time talking aloud to himself in broken sentences, and appearing to be enmeshed in the network of a dream.

Young as he was—and he could not have been more than eighteen—he already was possessed of a very fine face, and a handsome, well-knit figure. Now he stepped over the pavement with a light and buoyant step, as if his thoughts bounded with a sudden elasticity; and now he almost dragged his feet behind him, as if he were really loth to pursue any further the purpose on which he had determined.

Yet there was that in his countenance that indicated a high aim and a resolute will. Even when his gait changed so suddenly he did not seem to betray any serious symptoms of vacillation. His eye was open, full of vivacity, and expressive of the most perfect frankness. A cloud of thoughtfulness threw its dull shadow across his brow; but it indicated nothing like confusedness, or perplexity,

or a lack of complete reliance on his own power. He carried himself erectly, regarding what was around him without the least degree of bewilderment, albeit with some considerable curiosity.

Had any one been sufficiently inquisitive to have followed after this individual wherever he went, he would have necessarily been seduced into a walk that he otherwise might never have taken. Up one street, and down another; now doubling upon his own course, and now making no headway at all; around one corner at first, and then coming presently pat on that very same corner again: forward and backward thus he went in quest of the object for which he had originally come to the city.

Now and then he drew a little card from his pocket, which he paused to consult; and then nervously thrusting it back into its place of secretion, he went on again.

Presently he drew in sight of the wharves. A view of the vessels threw him into better spirits immediately. He pushed on directly for their vicinity, and by dint of judicious inquiry, soon found himself on the particular street he sought. It remained now only for him to walk along till he came to the number designated on his card.

Arriving before a certain dingy building, he looked up along the door; and to the side of it he saw secured a small, narrow strip of tin, on which was painted in capitals:—

JACOB DOLLAR.

“Yes,” said he, aloud, “I’ve found it finally.” So making a spring and a bound, he landed half way up the stairs at once.

From the head of the flight he pushed his way along to the little half-glass door of an office or counting-room, in which was seated an individual alone. At a single glance through the window the young man observed that he was intently engaged over the morning paper. His back being turned toward the door, Duncan likewise observed that his head was rather gray, and on its crown decidedly bald. Before venturing to open the door and enter, an inconceivable whim possessed him to look around the gloomy apartment from which this miniature room had been cornered off.

It was a low, dark, and dirty room, with a great variety of articles of different degrees of value and usefulness stowed away back in its rear, and seemed rather to be a loft for the lodgment of lumber—boards, boxes, casks and staves—than a place for the regular transaction of a respectable business.

Dust was every where, upon every thing—piled thick and high; a wine-cellar itself could not have asked for more. And cobwebs hung plentifully around, swinging and sailing on the draughts of air that entered, and curtaining windows, chinks, crevices and holes with a grotesqueness that many might have mistaken for grace. The floor was stained and filthy, and the dirt had been pressed and matted down by continual stepping upon it. In any view and every view it was a thoroughly dungeony and uninviting place.

The young man turned the latch and went in. As the door opened the elderly gentleman crushed his paper together in his lap and looked round over his shoulders to see who it was. And the youth walked forward until he stood before his face.

“Ah!” said the master of the premises, when his first glance assured him that he had a stranger in his web;

"good-morning, sir!" and he pulled along a vacant chair with his foot for his visitor to sit down upon.

Duncan sat down in obedience to the hint thus delicately conveyed, and took off his hat with the design of making both himself and his errand better known.

"My name is Morrow," said the young man, without further preface; "Duncan Morrow."

"Um!" responded the other, rather pleasantly than unpleasantly, as if he did not as yet see exactly what that fact had to do with him. Yet his gray, greedy eyes did brighten the least degree in the world when the sound of that name first greeted his ears.

"I suppose you are my uncle," said Duncan, expecting his relative to do nothing less now than rise from his chair and embrace him.

"Eh?" asked the man. "Humph! what did you say just now?"

"I believe I am your nephew," returned Duncan, this time quite modestly.

"My nephew, hey? Well, and how do you go to work to make that out?"

The cold-blooded man of money threw his arm over a neighboring chair, still holding the newspaper between his thumb and forefinger, and tilted himself backward in an attitude that was the perfection of lazy ease and comfort. Looking Duncan fixedly in the face with his cold, dull, unfeeling eye, he repeated his interrogatory, "How do you make that out?"

"Is not your name, then, Mr. Dollar?" asked the young man.

"Well, it is. Nobody was ever disposed to call that in question that I know of. What then?"

"Is it not Mr. Jacob Dollar?"

"Most assuredly, sir."

"Then you are certainly my uncle."

"Humph! I don't see that yet!"

"If you will permit me to explain," pursued the young man.

"Oh! as for that, I'm not so very particular as you may think me; but go on if you've got any thing of any importance to say. Go on, sir, if you wish. It's all nothing to me, I'm sure."

"My mother's maiden name," said Duncan, "was Dollar. She was your own sister. Though I do not remember ever to have seen you—"

"No, I guess you never did," interrupted Mr. Dollar.

"Yet I do remember very well what she has told me, on the subject, from my earliest days."

"Um!" chimed in the merchant, flapping his paper to and fro rather uneasily in his hand.

"She is dead," said the nephew.

"I suppose she is," returned the merchant, without the least betrayal of regard for her.

"And left some property, somewhere—though it was but a little."

"Where did she leave it? Do you know?" asked the merchant, fixing his cold eyes steadily on those of his nephew.

"I believe it was intrusted to your management," said Duncan. "Was it not?"

"To my management! To my—um! No. I know nothing at all about it! I never knew that she owned a single dollar in the world! How should I know of such things, pray? To my management, truly! Umph!"

"Yet I really do not understand why she should say so, if such was not the fact."

"Young man," returned his uncle, increasing, if possible, the searching severity of his look toward him,

"young man, I fear you've got into the wrong shop here! Before you set about your work, whatever it is, let me just advise you to understand your ground. Please to remember what I tell you, as long as you live. It will do you a great deal of good, and save you much trouble before you get through!"

"But it was for nothing of this kind that I ventured to call in on you," said Duncan, in a style of coolness and steadiness that surprised even so collected a man as his uncle.

"Um!" again exclaimed the latter, forcing up the sound from a great way down his throat.

Just then the office door opened, and a young man entered. He was overmuch dressed, and seemed to feel quite satisfied with the impression he must make upon every one. Going straight to the desk, he filled out the blank form of a check, and stepped to his father to ask him to sign it. The latter glanced at the figures, by which the amount was specified, and immediately thrust his hand into his pocket. Drawing forth a huge pocket-book, he opened it with great care, and took from it a number of bank notes, and of not the smallest denomination, either.

"Take these, my son," said the father. "Give me the check. I'd rather you wouldn't go to the bank. Come always to me. Only be prudent, Henry. You know what I've often told you."

And upon this, Mr. Dollar took the check from his son, and laid it on the little fire of coals.

The last comer threw a hasty glance at his cousin, not once dreaming that he was such, and went out, gayly humming and whistling together a snatch from one of the newest operatic solos, while he employed his hands with readjusting the little diamond pin that glittered against the rich ground of his satin neckerchief.

Duncan thought he could take into his comprehension the young man's character at once; and if he knew how he felt, he thought that he felt really disgusted.

"What I took the liberty to come in for this morning," said he, returning to the topic that chiefly interested him, "was to ask of you a little assistance. I am not very well supplied with money, and feel anxious to secure some regular business for myself, in which I may have a chance of advancement. I thought that possibly you could help me a little."

Mr. Dollar preserved silence, though he shook his head negatively and very, very slowly. Now he fixed his eyes on the deadened fire.

"Perhaps you would be willing to assist me in getting such a place as I want?" said Duncan.

"No, I know of none," he answered, still intent on the fire, and trying to look—even when he spoke—as if no second person was in the room.

"Could you not give me a place with yourself?" asked the young man.

"No, sir; I don't want a clerk. My son Henry is all the clerk I need."

A pause of a minute or two.

"Do you know of any firm that would like assistance, sir?" pursued Duncan.

Mr. Dollar turned on him now with a highly sardonic smile; and asked him how he thought he was going to be of assistance to any one, when he was the very person most in need of that article! There was an uncalled for rancor in the tone of the remark that did not escape the just appreciation of the nephew. But unmindful of the sneering reproof, the young man ventured another appeal.

"May I ask you then, sir, if you will lend me a small

sum of money, until I can repay you. I can then have more time to look about for myself."

"I'm not in the habit of making permanent investments," was the sarcastic reply.

"But I will pledge you my honor that every cent shall be returned, with full interest added!"

"Honor, as you call it, don't pass for security, exactly, among business men."

"Then if I can find abundant security, you are willing to oblige me with a loan?" said Duncan, trying to make the best of it.

"I don't know about that, either," answered Mr. Dollar.

The young man looked straight into his uncle's face. For a moment—and but for a moment—the blood mantled his cheeks, his forehead, and flew into his eyes with its rapid flush; and then he was suddenly calmer than the man who so coldly and sneeringly repelled him.

At once a lofty resolve took possession of his soul. It seemed to fill him with a new and unwonted strength. He immediately rose from his seat, and abruptly wished his uncle good-morning.

"Good-morning, sir," returned the latter with all his former cold civility.

And long, long after the door shut again, that icy-hearted man sat in the same position, gazing with a rapt silence into the fire. Occasionally he gave utterance to some exclamation, as if he might not be clear of all fears; but that was all. And even these ejaculations echoed with a dull and leaden voice against the walls of his low and dingy counting-room.

For once in his life, the astute man of trade had made a great mistake in his maneuvering. Possibly, in good time, he would be allowed to see it more plainly for himself.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRAVELING MENAGERIE.

MRS. NUBBLES could hardly bring herself to it; but she did yield in time. How she came to give in, and give in to her husband, too—that is a point that, if explained at all, will be done as completely in six words as in sixty.

The fact was, when warm weather was settled—Gabriel's life having been providentially prolonged through his many sufferings until that period—a traveling menagerie happened to stray away through the country in the neighborhood of Draggledew Plain, and pitched its soiled canvas tents just within the little manufacturing village of Spindleville.

Now Mr. Nubbles was going over himself. He never failed to go to such places. And Kit was going too. Should Gabriel go? That was the question.

Mrs. Nubbles said—no. Mr. Nubbles said—yes. And between them both what was likely to be done?

But Kit—for a wonder—chanced to feel in a decent mood just at the crisis of this parental dispute, and bawled out to them both—

“Thunder! Let him go! What's the use, mother?”

And so Gabriel went. And that was the way he came to go.

It would have made even Mr. Nubbles's old mare herself laugh, if she could have been allowed to stand some-

where by the side of the road and see the turnout that day achieved by the male portion of the family. Or if the same animal could only have stolen a furtive glance over her shoulder, and noted the various and ludicrous peculiarities of the picturesque group behind her, she must certainly have plodded on to the end of her journey showing her horse-teeth all the way !

There sat Mr. Nubbles, exactly in the middle of the great, deep-backed, high-shouldered seat ; with one hand pulling by the reins as earnestly as if his steed were capable of making the time of a Highflyer, in the place of being the broken-spirited, cob-meal eating jade she was—and with the other steadying the hickory stalk of his whip over his right shoulder ; while from beneath the narrow rim of his enormous bell-shaped hat—seedy as the very hat itself—floated out upon the light wind the mahogany-hued locks that neighbored upon his long ears ; his knees set up sharply, and together ; and his eyes fixed—like the eyes of a pilot in a gale—in the forward direction he was so anxious for his mare to take him.

Kit was jammed and squeezed into the seat on one side of his father, for comfort's sake rather rolled up on his side, his chubby cheeks pressed in against his eyes nearly as hard as his father was pressing upon him, and one fat hand grasping the seat as if for speedy deliverance from the operation that was being performed on him. As the old wagon jolted over the stones and down into the pitches, and as Kit labored only the harder to hold on, his reddened cheeks vibrated like two solid molds of jelly freshly formed.

Gabriel sat in the bottom of the wagon right in front of them both, now preserving his equilibrium by hugging fondly the long leg of Mr. Nubbles, and now by quickly throwing an arm over the high, old-style dasher.

Grotesque and fanciful as this party of travelers looked, the fact that they were themselves least conscious of any thing of the kind served but to make them still more so. Now the dust rose up in a cloud in their faces. Now Mr. Nubbles took down the hickory whip-stalk from over his right shoulder, and belabored the poor beast till she would fain have turned round and asked him what on earth he wanted. In truth, Mr. Nubbles wanted nothing; he did not even know that he wanted her to go faster. But he had refreshed himself just before leaving home that morning with a plentiful supply of spirits and water, and his ideas now began very naturally to quicken a little under its influence; so that by means of his whip he was simply giving proof of his awakening feelings. Perhaps, by long acquaintance, the mare knew this very well; and that might be the reason why she jogged along in just the same slow and steady trot, taking up her feet not a bit faster for her master's urgency.

The moment they came in sight of the village of Spindleville, with the many factory buildings holding their heads high up in the sun, their roofs turreted, and bel-fried, and balconied—Kit instinctively gave utterance to a cry of joy; and upon Gabriel's looking round in his face, he discovered that the gross creature was opening and shutting his eyes with the delight that had taken possession of him. Gabriel continued to gaze at him, for in his innocence he thought him a phenomenon quite as noticeable as any he would see that day in cage and under canvas.

Suddenly a great change came over Kit's countenance.

"What 're you starin' at, gawky?" said he to Gabriel, who had become so much interested in him that he forgot he was looking steadily in his face.

The latter immediately turned his head in the other

direction. And then Kit reached forth his foot and kicked him.

"Now learn to look to home, will ye!" said he, in a low tone, gritting his teeth.

"What ye 'bout, Kit?" sounded up his father, waking out of a half reverie and looking down on his son.

"Oh, father!" exclaimed he, playing well his part of the petty hypocrite—"oh, I want ter see that cage o' monkeys so much! Wonder if I can't buy one! Thunder! what d'ye s'pose they 'd take, father?"

"Guess they won't sell 'em," said his father, looking remarkably wise, and giving the mare another cut with the lash.

The creature, justly offended at last, whisked her tail around into Gabriel's face and eyes, bringing tears. Kit laughed aloud—"Ho! ho! ho!"

Another exciting moment was it for them when they came to a convenient place by the road side on the village outskirts, and took out the mare from the wagon, throwing down to her the bundle of hay Mr. Nubbles had brought stowed in behind the seat; and a still more exciting one when they went from this spot, sauntering over to the mammoth tents in which were concealed the day's curiosities.

Mr. Nubbles walked ahead, Kit directly behind him, while Gabriel meekly brought up the rear. Mr. Nubbles kept his right hand stuck just in the edge of his breeches pocket, and went blundering and stumbling along, half speaking to every one he met, and now and then stopping to inquire if things were all right over there at the tent, and pretty nearly as they were advertised. After he had received abundant assurances on the subject, without further preliminaries he made directly for the scene of his day's operations.

In their way were strung along several little booths, and many cake and cooky stands, the sights and savors around which at once impressed Mr. Nubbles's attention ; but not a whit quicker than they had that of his only son Kit.

"Father !" called out his offspring—"cakes ! and beer ! Father !"

So his parent very deliberately drew up before one of the gingerbread stalls that consisted of nothing more than a rough pine board laid across the heads of a couple of empty flour-barrels ; upon it were a dozen bottles or so of spruce beer, a pile of cheap varnished gingerbread, and four or five small plates of opened oysters, that must, in a consumptive state, have bade farewell to existence, lying dead there in their own slime, and trying to cook in the broad heat of the sun that shone down upon them.

Mr. Nubbles regarded his boy as he called out to him.

"What 'll ye have, Kit ?" said he, his right hand still in rest at the edge of his pocket.

"Gingerbread !" said the son.

"Yis," remarked Mr. Nubbles to the salesman, taking his hand from his pocket, and gesticulating in the direction of the sweetened sheets. "Yis, le's have !"

"Beer, too," said Kit, his cheeks distended with the large circular piece he had ravenously abstracted from the gingerbread.

"Beer !" ordered Mr. Nubbles of the man, who was regarding the gormandizing youth with a merry twinkle of his eye. "Have some, Gabriel ?" the factor offering a third thin glass tumbler.

"No, sir," answered Gabriel. "I don't wish for any."

"What, nor no gingerbread, neither ?"

"No, sir ; I thank you."

"Let him go without then, father," said Kit, nearly

choking himself to get the kind injunction out of his mouth as quick as he wanted. "He don't know nothin' how good 'tis! He'll learn, mebbby, one o' these days though!"

And thereupon Kit bolted his full glass of beer at a draught, and began to wipe his mouth with the cuff of his sleeve, saying to himself—

"Gracious! That 's good! Good!"

Mr. Nubbles eat gingerbread, as he always did at such places; and the alternate bite of the sweet card and draught of bubbling beer seemed to him to taste all the better, flavored as they were with the delicious strains of a squeaking fiddle from a neighboring booth, and the riotous "toroddle-torol" of a party of tipsy singers who were strolling arm in arm over the ground.

Mr. Nubbles's little party continued standing at the fourpenny stall for some time longer, enjoying it quite all they could, and forming objects of downright gratification to those not altogether as unique in appearance as themselves.

The inside of the tents or pavilions afforded them a treat for which even they were hardly prepared. Every thing looked so magnificent, so bewildering. They gazed and gazed, till their sense of vision must certainly have been the acutest sense of all the five. And as they wandered, so they wondered.

Here were cages of leopards, spotted all so beautifully and looking sleeker and softer than any cats. And here were cages of tigers, and cages of panthers and hyenas, snarling and growling continually at the visitors and at each other; and of zebras, striped as regularly as if some human hand, armed with paint and brush, had done it all; and of horned horses, looking like nothing at all either on the earth itself, or in the waters under the earth; and

of huge human-visaged apes and baboons, great serious-looking creatures, around whom people gathered with a feeling of half-stupid wonder ; and another cage, with various subdivisions, full of monkeys, great and small, whose motions seemed perpetual, and whose antics provoked peal upon peal of laughter from those who, for some reason, thought themselves wiser than they.

And there were high and long coops of birds, from land and sea, such as Kit Nubbles had never seen or heard of before, even if his father had, that kept up a ceaseless din of screams and screeches ; and boxes of serpents, hideous and frightful, a sight of which made the very flesh creep ; and stuffed specimens of one thing and another ; wax figures and other curiosities, as like as horse-chestnuts are to chesnut horses, and marvelously interesting those who had never regaled their eyes on such articles of *virtu* before.

Kit seemed determined to stick by the cage of monkeys ; and feeling that he was perfectly safe in that place, his father concluded to leave him for a little time and go round and pick up a few old friends of his own. At first Gabriel kept near Kit, and listened to what that youth had to say—to himself of course—of his friends on the other side of the bars ; but he found very soon that he was growing tired of this, and thought there could be no possible harm in his looking round a little elsewhere for himself.

So that when the never-omitted pony performance came on, the grotesque group that Mr. Nubbles's mare had that morning brought over to the place of entertainment were scattered and divided, neither knowing where the other was.

Not long before the exhibition performances were over, a man with a queer expression of face, whom Gabriel had

observed eyeing him pretty closely for some time, finally reached down to take the boy's hand in his own, and asked him where he belonged.

Gabriel told him; and told him the whole story.

"Humph!" said the man, in an enticing manner; "that's no place at all!"

Gabriel's eyes suddenly opened. Perhaps this man could show him a better!

"Go with me now," said the stranger, bestowing on him a very pleasant look. "Come! I'll take care of you—better care than you get now. See if I don't. Come!"

"Where?" asked the boy.

His mind was in exactly that state that rendered him susceptible to the slightest influences, especially if they happened to be in his favor, and at all soothing to his feelings.

"Oh, away from here, my little fellow," said his new friend, gently enticing him away from the crowd.

"Away from Kit? and away from his mother, too?" asked Gabriel.

Yes, he should certainly have an asylum far beyond their tyrannous reach.

And so, half joyful and half hesitating, he went out through the door of the pavilion, leaving the remnant of the Nubbles family behind him, and secretly wishing them all "good riddance" at that.

Around the outside of the tent this man carefully guided him, bidding him keep close at his heels, and not for a moment to lose sight of him. And Gabriel thoughtfully did as he was requested.

Pretty soon the crowds within the tent began to move out. They poured forth in black masses and columns, so that one who looked might well wonder how it was the tent could hold them all. Here and there over the

ground they began to scatter themselves, some crowding around the gingerbread and oyster stands, and there discussing in loud voices the character and worth of the amusement for which they had parted with their silver; some strolling about with scarce any purpose at all, except simply to see and hear what was going forward; and some few others—the restless and turbulent spirits that always gather at such places—seeking for the many slight causes that might, in their skillful hands, be distorted into either a private fight or a row general.

It was not long, either, before there was such a gathering. People began to flock to the spot from all quarters, crowding and squeezing their way among those who were already stationary spectators. And Mr. Nubbles, too—now quite alone in the field—was drawn into the circling influence of the excitement, and moved along in haste with the rest.

“A fight! a fight!” was the cry that saluted him on all sides.

“Stand back! Fair chance, all! Make a ring!”

“Yes; give ’em room! Clear the ring for ’em!” were the next exciting calls he caught.

The moment Mr. Nubbles could bring his eyes into a range with the heads of the combatants, he saw that they were two boys; and on taking the trouble to pursue his investigations still further, he made the unpleasant discovery that at least one of the parties in action was no other individual than his own beloved son Christopher!

“Hit him agin!”—“Chubb’ll git licked!”—“Go it, cotton-bug!”—“Hit a leetle lower, Chubby!” cried the inside of the ring.

The remainder merely huzzaed and clapped their hands as the fortunes of the battle vacillated either this way or

that; enjoying it with as hearty a relish as a Spanish amphitheater ever enjoyed an imperial bull-fight.

There was Kit—the petty tyrant, Kit—his hair all pulled and twisted away—his face completely streaked with scratches and covered with blood—his eyes nearly shut together for bruises—still kicking, and biting, and scratching, and fisting. Alas! alas! for his home-made reputation—a picture of woe indeed!

Mr. Nubbles could not stand that. He jammed his way through the crowd by exertions worthy of Hercules himself; and, pouncing frantically upon his only child and heir, drew him by main force out of the circle, amid the cheers and jeers, the laughter and sneers of the excited throng!

Kit for once had been fortunate enough to get his share. The probability was that he would return home perfectly satisfied with the striking lesson he had that day learned.

But Gabriel?—Gabriel?

No; Mr. Nubbles could find him nowhere around; and in the midst of his double chagrin he started sullenly for Worrywitch Hill again, one half mad and the other half tipsy, without him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BEAUTIFUL MUTE.

MARTHA accosted her sister one pleasant afternoon and proposed a walk.

"Fudge!" said Mary.

"But you will feel all the better for it! It will do you good. Come; I want to stroll over in the neighborhood of the village. Why will you not go with me?"

"Oh, but this country life is so insufferably tedious. I wish I was back in town again!"

"But that's foolish, Mary. You know it is!"

"Foolish? Why foolish, pray? Am I in fault for my tastes?"

"No; but I mean that when we are so circumstanced as not to be able to live as comfortably and as happily in town as here, it is wrong for us to complain of our life here. Now what could be pleasanter than this? Come, put on your hat and come along with me!"

Mary hesitated. "Where are you going?" at last asked she.

"We will take a walk through the village, if you like."

"What! and be stared at so by all of those great green men, and their wives and children! That's a pleasure—as I suppose you would call it—that I can't endure. If you like it, at least I must say that I don't!"

"Nonsense, Mary. You can't expect to get through

such a world as this is without being looked at. People will be at the pains to distinguish you from me, if they can. You're getting too sensitive, I fear."

"But to be stared at till you feel that you are being fairly perforated!"

"Oh, well, Mary, that's only a whim. These people, some of them, probably, never saw such as we are before; so do let's give them an opportunity to gratify their curiosity. And it's not at all unlikely, either, that we may be the innocent means—by our example, for instance—of teaching them something. Come, Mary! come, now!"

"If I go, Martha, you must understand that it is only for your sake."

"Well, I'll take it so, and thank you for it accordingly."

The sisters therefore were soon on their way along the winding road that conducted down to the village on the plain; and Martha's tongue was going faster by far than her feet. There was not a single scene of beauty that her quick eye did not detect; there was not an object of natural interest, whether tree, or rock, or shrub, or bird, that she did not stop short to comment upon and admire. Mary, of course, thought the most of what she said nothing but sheer nonsense, and affected to care but a trifle for it.

"I don't see any particular reason," said she, "for going mad over the view of such a rough and rocky country as this is."

"There!" exclaimed Martha; "look down below us now!"

They had reached the place on the hillside from which a beautiful view was to be had of the entire village. Lapped in the circuit of the quiet plain, it seemed to be sleeping in the embrace of the loving hills around. It called up in the mind at once thoughts of retirement from the

bustle and hurly-burly of crowds, of peace from the daily strife of commercial marts, and of repose from all the wearing and worrying fatigues of busy life. Martha felt her soul refreshed with so delightful a view, and stood drinking it in at her eyes. Her sister, however, was pledged to herself to be dissatisfied with every thing she saw.

"If you call this as pleasant as — street, or as the Common, then I must say you have very queer tastes; that 's all."

Descending into the plain at length; they passed slowly along the street of the village, on either side of which stood white and brown houses—some close together; and some at irregular distances from one another—looking this way and that, and remarking on what they saw in the same spirit with which each had set out. One found pleasure in every thing; the other decided that every thing was homely, and lonesome, and insufferable.

After walking the length of the village they still continued their way, winding a little to the left, and coming upon one of the sweetest home-scenes imaginable. Martha proposed stopping to get some water; and as her sister offered no objections to sipping a gill or so of country water herself, they went into the yard.

The house within the yard was only a wee bit of a white-washed cottage but a single story high, set back some distance from the grassy roadside, and more than half-hidden behind the flowering lilacs.

"Isn't this beautiful?" exclaimed Martha.

Mary said nothing, though she must herself have thought so, too.

The very smallest patch of lawn in the world was stretched from the door to the road, over which were rooted, here and there, shrubs and dwarf trees, that

offered to the passer, in hot summer weather, a couch as inviting as green grass offered any where.

"There!" exclaimed Mary, in a whisper. "There's some one in the yard. Who is it?"

Going through the tiny wicket, they came quite unexpectedly on a tall, fair-faced girl, who stood picking a handful of flowers from one of the many clumps of bushes. As soon as she chanced to turn round and see the strangers, she started, and involuntarily put up both hands.

"We are very warm and tired," said Martha to her. "Can you give us a glass of water?"

The girl made her no answer, but continued looking straight in her face. Even Mary thought she had never seen so beautiful an expression on a human face, in all her life.

"We will thank you for a little water," said Martha again, raising her voice.

Still no answer, and still the girl kept gazing at her in that same interesting way.

"She must be deaf," said Mary, in a low voice.

Martha came nearer still to her, and was about to speak louder yet. But the girl, seeing what she would do, and now for the first time breaking away from the influence of the stranger's eyes, took hold gently of the hand of Martha with one of her own, while she carried the other to her mouth, shaking her head as she did so with a mournful smile.

A voice was heard at that instant in the front door, informing them that the girl was not only deaf, but dumb beside! The sisters looked round to see who had spoken, and observed a middle-aged, kind-looking woman standing before them, who appeared to take a deep interest in the happiness of the mute, though neither of them suspected her of being her mother.

At once the unfortunate girl led Martha to the woman, and made signs to her that no one but themselves could understand.

"We would like some cold water, if you please," said Martha.

The woman asked them to come in, and promised to wait on them immediately. So they followed her in; and while they waited for her to draw the water freshly from the well at the back of the house, their eyes were occupied with a quick survey of the very limited premises.

The interior of this *petite* mansion was rather a curiosity, than otherwise. Every thing had been constructed, and every thing was conducted on such a very minute, but pretty scale. It looked more like a child's playhouse than any thing else one could think of, with the same child's broken bits of crockery and jammed tin-ware arranged in obedience to the trifling fancies of youth, and all the furniture made in perfect adaptation to the requirements of such a miniature household.

Such a little parlor! the like was never seen before, even in such a nest of a country box! And such low windows, whose panes were hardly larger than the bare palm of your hand. And such a snug little entry, into which the front-door opened, and in which they sometimes sat during the long afternoon of summer, when the hot sun had got round behind the house and the trees!

The fireplace must certainly have been made for a mere plaything, too. And the square carpet had such a very queer, but very neat little figure. And the casements were all so clean, rubbed and scrubbed until they glistened as with a new coat of varnish. And the row of smooth sea-shells, with specked backs and red lips, stood ranged so tastefully on the little mantle. And in the summer-time, too, it looked so cool as they sat there—

that mixed bunch of asparagus and evergreens stuck tidily up in the fireplace, and the polished hearth washed so scrupulously clean!"

This woman, as it seemed, and this deaf and dumb girl, were the only inmates of the dwelling. The name of the former—as she herself narrated it to the girls—was Mrs. Polly; and the girl herself was called Alice. She was the only sister and near relative of the same Duncan Morrow, whose first experiments in town life, a few years before, the reader is already somewhat acquainted with.

A purer, sweeter, more patient and true-hearted girl than Alice Morrow, could nowhere be found. United with such an uncommonly gentle disposition, too, was a person of almost faultless symmetry and of surpassing beauty. Her countenance was superlatively lovely; and her smile seemed to light the little parlor with radiant sunshine. But it was chiefly to that mute look of interested, yet of modest inquisitiveness, that a stranger was generally drawn; as if she silently craved your sympathies for her isolated condition, and at the same moment asked you if by some means you could not do something to relieve her, or say some word that would pierce the gloom of her entombed existence. Mutes always have highly interesting countenances, for the invariable expression of them is that of an appeal to your inmost pity; and Alice was nowise an exception to the truth of the remark.

There was no one that knew her—and every body thereabouts did know her—that did not secretly love her. Her very name was as a sweet savor to the simple-hearted people, far and near. If people ever had occasion to speak of what the village was, or of what it contained, or how pleasant and agreeable was any single one of its accessories, Alice Morrow—the beautiful mute—was never

forgotten. They spoke of her, too, with almost as much pride as affection. Humble as was her life among only humble people, it was perhaps even more remarked upon than that of all the rest of them together.

Mrs. Polly was a woman with an exceedingly kind heart, and a bosom filled with charity and love. In her hands, as an old acquaintance of his mother, Duncan Morrow had placed his unfortunate sister, satisfied that she would here not want for even the most trifling attention. He saved regularly a certain sum of money each month from what he was able to earn, making it a religious duty out of this to provide for her as long as she might live. A courageous brother, and as generous as courageous.

If the reader will pardon the digression.—For the few years that the devoted brother had now lived away from her in town, he had remitted her with strict punctuality large savings from his salary. First securing for himself a situation, and that, too, without the assistance of a single human being, he made the resolve to become so useful to his employers that they should feel his continuance with them an absolute necessity. Then he went on step by step, slowly but surely, earning his good name as he advanced, until he saw that his end had finally been accomplished, and that he had become a fixture in the establishment.

He could not help the feeling that for his position he owed nothing at all to the influence of his uncle. On the contrary he was very certain that in divers ways he had frequently run against the direct efforts of that same uncle, who had exerted himself not very lovingly to blast the young man's reputation with his employers. This was all done indirectly, to be sure; but it troubled Duncan not in the least; for he felt the assurance that with

common fortune, he would be able in good time to destroy the bud of such an influence altogether.

Yet the very nature of such an opposition did awaken him to a new and more thorough study of that uncle's character, and led him to investigate with a close and watchful scrutiny the probable motive that lay concealed beneath his conduct. What could be the meaning of this? Why should a man reputedly rich—like Jacob Dollar—fear for a single moment either the influence or the neighborhood of one as humble as himself? Why this hot haste to procure his disgraceful expulsion from his place, after it had been secured only by years of integrity and faithful labor, unless for the reason that there was some ugly secret hidden beneath, that the rich man feared might some day be revealed?

Might not this be the real fact?

Duncan kept it revolving in his thoughts nearly all the time.

Many and many an evening in the quiet summer-time, would Alice and her protector sit at the door of their pretty little dwelling, while the dim shadows were grouping slowly on the lawn and beneath the distant elms, and recall to their own hearts the multiplied sources of happiness that lay right in their humble path, thinking in silence of the calm lives they led there in the remote country, that seemed, like brooks, to swim pleasantly through scenes of sequestered peace and beauty; and of the friends they felt were every where around them; and of the absent one who was so kind, and his hopes for himself in the undisclosed future. And there at the evening hour they felt wholly happy in the peace that distilled like the dew all around them.

Sometimes a neighbor passed, coming from the village, and sometimes, too, Mrs. Polly would receive a letter for

Alice from her brother. It was with the liveliest joy that she broke them open, while her fair countenance, alternately smiling and thoughtful, always expressed the delightful satisfaction for which—poor girl!—she could never find words.

Among her more recent letters from him, occurred a paragraph or two that shall excuse itself for being transcribed in this place:—

“I am comfortably located in all respects, dear Alice, and have many valuable friends. Among others—but you shall know it all in time. Our uncle Jacob I hardly know what to think of. He is a strange and unaccountable man, and seems to grow more and more so to me daily. But what he can mean by the bold interference in my affairs, of which I wrote you a few letters ago, rather surpasses my present comprehension. It may all come out to the light, however, in time. How is it possible for him to fear me or you? Why should he thus, of his own choice, place himself exactly in my path, and be so very sure to injure no one but himself in the end?

“Shall I confess to you that I have serious suspicions both of his honor and honesty? Shall I tell you that I think I have already made discoveries respecting his disposition of our dear mother’s little property—though so little, yet quite enough, dear Alice, to make you comfortable, that will blast him and his name forever, if I see fit to give them to the world? And just so surely as I am interfered with in the manner in which he has begun with me, I shall feel it my duty to employ even extreme measures, to repel the assaults he has made in secret, both on me and my character!”

A scene and a personage like this, the two sisters lin-

gered for some time to contemplate; while good Mrs. Polly, after putting sundry questions in relation to their new mode of life, and their like and dislike of the country in general, entertained them with a broken narrative of the character of the deaf and dumb girl, and her several sources of enjoyment.

“But you shall certainly come over with her to our place!” insisted Martha with earnestness, as they rose to resume their walk. “We have been so agreeably surprised in coming upon you here!”

And Mrs. Polly made a promise, not less for herself than on behalf of her young friend, and the promise was of a character very likely, as things go in rural life, to be fulfilled.

Alice took each by the hand as they left her, and a heavenly smile irradiated her face that lived for days in the hearts of the sisters.

Perhaps Mary had learned a gentle lesson of true contentment already—yes, even from a dumb girl!

CHAPTER XIII.

A WALK ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

PROCEEDING further on, they came at length to a road or lane, on their right hand, by following which they would succeed in reaching home again by a circuitous route; Mary hesitating about extending their walk any more than was necessary, and Martha, as ever, pleading in her earnest and impulsive way for any course that would in the least heap new views of nature in her memory's portfolio, or add even a trifle to the ardor of her enjoyment. Mary was finally over-persuaded by the warm appeals of her sister, as indeed she said she always was, and consented to making the desired detour.

"Now don't you feel abundantly paid for coming out this afternoon?" said Martha. "What a surprise it was! What a sweet and charming creature! Did you ever see such a heavenly face, Mary, in all your life?"

"Really I was not expecting an entertainment of just such a nature," said her sister. "Is n't it an odd little box of a house?"

"Just the one I have many and many a time pictured in my own imagination—"

"I warrant you! I warrant you!"

"—As the spot where I would love to spend my days. Why, such a nest is too small to let trouble in! There would n't be room for any thing more than ourselves,

Mary! Did you ever see happiness in so small a compass before? Really now, without any denying it, was n't you envious of the two inmates of that place, all the time you sat there? Did n't you keep saying to yourself, 'Oh, if I could but own such a spot as this!' Now tell me only the truth, Mary!"

"No; I'm sure I was saying to myself no such thing. I thought it all very pretty, and what more was to be thought about it? Pray don't go crazy over every little specimen of rusticity you see, Martha!"

"Of rurality, you had better have said; I like that word better. No, I hardly think I'm going out of my senses yet, Mary; but I declare I never felt such a continual excitement on me all the while I lived in town. It's such a feeling of pleasure, too. It does n't cloy one as the scenes of city life too often do. It's nature, Mary, all nature, and there's no unhealthiness in that."

"Oh, well; I suppose nature is all well enough in its place, but its place is n't every where!"

"No, that it is n't, Mary. You'll find very little of it in town, I think!—either in society or in the streets!"

A prattling brook crept down through a patch of green grass in the meadow, and came glistening out from beneath the old stone wall, exactly across the road. A miniature bridge had leaped its boundaries, and upon this bridge the girls instinctively stopped to watch the gurgling flow of the water. Its bed of pebbles was worn smooth, so that the pavement shone and glistened beneath the blotches of the changing shadows till it looked like a beautiful mosaic. Martha only wished to take off her shoes and stockings and walk with her bare feet through the dimpling current.

"Now, do be as foolish as you can," protested her companion. "I declare, I begin to think you are quite

beside yourself. Always wanting to do what no person in their senses would ever dream of!"

"Why, Mary, you're much too censorious. Just look here a moment. Did you never read in poetry of just such pictures as those made by the white feet of girls on beds of smooth brook-pebbles, and the limpid water running over them? Don't you remember—"

"Don't I remember? Fudge, Martha! Fudge, I say! Don't go to trying now to be poetic in such a place as this!"

"In such a place as this? Why, any one would be likely to think this was just the place! Here is this most charming little brook; here is this rustic bridge, over whose old rail you can lean and almost see your face in the running water: what more could one wish, Mary?"

"You're much too sentimental for my taste. I aim to be practical. And besides, I can't see much hereabouts that is any thing but the sternest sort of reality. Where's the sentiment that you find in these old country walls? or in this narrow road, all dust and dirt—"

"And grass!" interrupted Martha.

"—Or in these whining little water-gullies that go washing the dirt before them through every place where a free passage is allowed them?"

"There is sentiment, Mary, in pavements; and in walls of brick; and straight rows of straight houses; and stacks of crowded chimneys! There is some sort of sentiment in these, Mary—eh? Oh, Mary! what a perverted taste you've got! Don't you know that it's old Dame Nature that's the mother not only of every living object, but of ourselves besides? Don't you know that she supplies us, and always has supplied us, with the very alphabet of our feelings? That from her we learn all our language in which we express our feelings and thoughts?"

Fie, Mary! What a perverse sister I have got, sure enough!"

To what extent this sisterly dispute might have been carried it can not be presumed to be known, had not the attention of the elder of the two been unexpectedly directed to a man in the distance, who had just climbed over the wall, and was now gazing at them as if he hardly knew what he was about.

"There!" exclaimed Mary, seizing her sister by the arm; "who's that?"

Martha looked at the person, and immediately her face colored deeply, "Why," said she, "it's Mr. Holliday!"

"Sure enough! But see, Mat, he'd like to get back over that wall again, if he could, and hide himself in the bushes; or perhaps he's thinking that he could run straight home, and not be seen by us at all."

Martha was still more confused, and the feeling was not at all allayed by the consciousness that her face was burning like a fire.

Mr. Holliday, who had at first sat perched on the top of the wall as in the act of getting over, proceeded to jump to the ground as he saw and recognized the girls, and to be all ready to offer them a cordial greeting when they came up. He expressed no little surprise at meeting them on so long and lonely a walk—though he would think it any thing but lonely for himself—and put them several earnest inquiries respecting their opinion of the neighborhood.

The youthful author himself was dressed in a highly picturesque style, and the admiration of both the girls was at once enlisted. He had been out nearly all day on a fishing excursion, whipping the brooks for trout. Accordingly he wore a suit adapted to his rustic vocation, made of some coarse and durable stuff, with long boots drawn

high from his feet, and a cap of dark gray upon his head. In his hand he carried his unjointed rod, which he had laced together again for convenience' sake, and over his left shoulder was thrown the wicker creel that held his spoils of the day.

Martha, of course, wanted to know what success he had had, whether her sister cared any thing about it or not. So he flung off the strap from his shoulder and opened the basket. Two pair of bright eyes were looking intently within at the same moment. Where the young man's eyes were I need not pretend to say.

In a bed of long green grass, still shining and wet, lay nestled a handful of plump and glossy fish, that looked so inviting, Martha must needs pull one out of the basket. The moist grass had been sprinkled over and under them to keep them perfectly fresh and full; and as the girl drew out only a single one, Mr. Holliday fished nearly all the rest up from the very bottom, and spread them out upon the border of grass at their feet.

How beautifully they looked there against the deep green of the grass, themselves all spotted with gold, and decked with broad iridescent streaks and changing hues of violet and purple! "Speckled beauties," Martha called them at once; and the fisherman assured her that that was the pet name they sometimes went by among the lovers of the angle. Their forms were faultless; and the absence of rough scales on them, and the substitution for them of these beautiful spots of purple and gold, made the finny creatures as tempting to their eyes as they are every where known to be to the palate.

"These all came from up the meadows," said the young man. "I know nearly all their haunts and holes, I believe—at least on this brook, and all I have to do is to catch them; that is, if I can!"

Martha thought it must be a most delightful recreation.

"Ah, Miss Rivers, it really is! To a tired man whose brain gets overtaxed, and whose nerves are quite unstrung, there is nothing in the world like it; unless it is riding on horseback, and that you know, one can not follow as long at a time as he can fishing. I sometimes tell people, who fancy they see no great profit in the occupation, that I don't follow the brook for fish altogether; half my dividend I take out in the form of healthy excitement and downright enjoyment. The fish are not much, and one can catch but a very few of them at best; but it's the sweet scenery through the heart of which the employment entices you, and the many fine bits of landscape your eye takes in, and the gushing songs of the birds in the jungles of birch and hazel. That's what throws around this sport such a charm."

"So it must," enthusiastically assented Martha. "Oh, I wish I could but go a-fishing myself!"

"Why, Martha!" exclaimed her sister.

"Yes, go a-fishing myself!" repeated she, still more emphatically. "Don't you wish you could go? What sport there must be in it!"

"You're simply an enthusiast," chided Mary.

"And that's simply what all true and devoted fishermen are," returned Mr. Holliday; "at least I speak only of those who haunt brooks and lonely solitudes. Why, Miss Rivers, did you ever see a trout jump—one of those great fat fellows such as lie at your feet?"

Mary was obliged to confess that she never did.

"Ah! then you know nothing what the excitement is! It is enough to make one's heart flutter in his very mouth. Even the oldest brethren in the pursuit never get wholly over the strangely electrical feeling. The fish is a wary creature, you know, and will not touch your

lure if he happens to see you ; so that if you take him at all, it is to be done by pure skill. These big fellows, now, reason exactly as we reason. If they have the least cause to suspect that some snare is set for them, or that danger is somehow connected with the little false fly that pretends to swim so daintily over their heads, they just wriggle their fins a trifle, and quietly decline the bribe. But if they are blind to danger, the moment they spy the float they dart with the velocity of thought straight upon it—sometimes jumping clear out of the water in their greedy haste ; and that is the time when the angler's heart jumps up, too !”

Mr. Holliday began to gather his fish and deposit them in his little creel again, strewing the grass over them as he had done before ; and shutting down the cover tightly, offered his escort to the girls as far as they were going. Glad to accept it, they walked on in company, renewing the subject of following brooks for recreation.

“I was going to add,” observed the author-angler, “that none but those who are wedded to this most quiet and reflective pursuit know a fraction of its pleasant temptations. The sudden surprises you experience, on coming unexpectedly out of a boggy shade into a little amphitheater of natural beauty, or on being seduced insensibly almost, into the dreamiest nooks it is possible to conceive of, or climbing a knoll, and finding stretched just below you a pool of water whose still surface is blotched all over with white and yellow lilies, unfolded gaudily to the sun—nobody can know the worth of them to a sensitive and sympathetic heart, unless he has enjoyed them again and again for himself. It is at these times and in these places that the blaze of worldly ambition dies down in the breast, and the feelings warm with a more gentle and genial heat. These are the times when real

love of all mankind spreads in the heart, as the circles themselves spread in the water."

"Martha is such a great admirer of nature," said her sister, "that I think she must appreciate all this most highly. Indeed, I know she is enjoying it."

"But are not you a lover of nature also?" he asked, not a little surprised to hear her express herself just in this way.

"Well, if you call this nature—no, sir; I should say I was n't."

"She likes it rather in bits—in small parcels," suggested Martha.

"As I think, and as my own nature is constituted, I am free to declare to every body that nature is the very best friend I have, or ever expect to have. She has taught me truths that I could hardly have learned elsewhere. She has been my mother, my sister, and my brother. I feel that she has the deepest possible sympathy with my heart—all the deeper and closer for being silent and unspoken. Like a little child I lay my head upon her breast, and at once my soul becomes calm and strong. Is there another source of such a universal sympathy any where in the world?"

"I thought," observed Martha, "that I knew something of what this passion was before we came out here into this quiet; but I find I did not. My sentiments have had a good education ever since I have been here."

Already they had come in sight of the little house of Mr. Holliday, and he moved to turn down into the lane that led along to it. He wished them a safe return home again, and thanked them earnestly for their invitation to call at their cottage as soon as agreeable.

"Quite a pleasant afternoon, Mary, take it all together," said Martha. "Don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes; I have enjoyed myself very well."

"Better than you expected, even?"

"Well, perhaps I have. I often do. That's not at all strange, is it?"

"I thought it more so than I should have thought it in the city. You are doing very well, sister, I must confess. Let me praise you."

When they approached their own home there was that in its appearance—there was that air of quiet and comfort around it that made the hearts of both the girls grateful indeed. It was a feeling they had not exactly experienced before since their removal hither; and it stole over them so gently, yet so suddenly, they quite forgot the change in their situation, in the secret joy of the moment.

Of course a great deal had to be told over at the tea-table of the experiences of the afternoon, and all joined in the conversation together. The touching story of the deaf and dumb girl enlisted the sympathies of the parents immediately; and they hoped to see her there at their house themselves. Both Mr. Rivers and his wife were more and more pleased with such accounts of Mr. Holliday as were brought them, especially by Martha; and in his society, despite the difference in their years, Mr. Rivers promised himself a great deal of refined enjoyment in the future.

Their good opinion was heightened not a little as in the course of the evening a girl handed in at their kitchen a platter, on which lay stretched four as fat and luscious trout as ever paddled a fin or leaped out of the water at a fly. The house was filled with nothing but exclamations and thanks.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER THE FEAST

AFTER every feast comes a reckoning. Pleasure alone soon cloy, and then follows the reaction of sickness and repentance. It was not less true in the case of Mr. Nahum Nubbles, than it is in that of other people at large.

As soon, therefore, as he arrived home that night, after his long day of sight-seeing at the menagerie, it was quite dusky and he was quite tipsy; so much so, that, with not the most distant intention or desire of slandering that worthy individual, he discovered that it commanded all the remaining resources of his genius to keep himself on his seat. Kit, the never-to-be-forgotten Kit, sat jammed up in one corner much as usual, bruised, punched and thoroughly sore. As the wagon jolted under his father's rather unsteady driving, he inwardly bewailed his luck, and outwardly bemoaned his sufferings.

"O—o—oh!" cried he often, in a minimum sort of tone.

"Wh's matter, Kit?" his father would ask, with that slippery way of the lip that men in his situation very frequently employ. "Wh's matter?"

"O—o—!" was all the youth would reply again.

Reaching Worrywitch Hill, the two, who were left of the party, drew up at the barn door, and there for a few moments stood together.

"Wait for me, Kit!" called Mr. Nubbles on his son, not wanting overmuch to enter the forbidding presence of his spouse alone. So the young gentleman did wait, passing the time in groaning and grunting among the various articles of trumpery within the shed. How Mr. Nubbles put up his horse that night, he had not the remotest recollection; and it is not probable that he ever had afterward.

When, after all, the father and his son did reach the kitchen door, they found the lady of the house altogether prepared to receive them. "Well!" said she, quite short and briskly.

"Yis!" returned her husband.

She stood and looked at him only, without a word.

"Yis, yis; 'ee got home 'gin!" said he, thinking to conciliate the temper of his wife with the blindest and most seductive tone at his command.

"Got home 'gin!" she cruelly mimicked him; "I sh'd think you had! Sure enough! But where's Gabriel?"

She put the inquiry in a tone that certainly betokened a little fear of his loss, much as she had pretended a desire be rid of him.

"Ware's hoo?" asked he, in return, striking an attitude that would allow him to bring his own eyes into something like a range with those of his wife.

"Gabriel, you ninny! The boy!"

"I ha'n't seen no boy," said he, dropping his eyes thoughtfully to the ground.

"The boy you took off with you this morning!" she returned, elevating her voice still more. "Where is he?"

"Ware's the—th' boy? Eh?" Ware is he? W'y, here he is, ooman!" and he clapped both hands heavily upon the back and shoulders of his own endeared son.

"O—o—oh!" shouted Kit, moving briskly out of his reach, and sitting down in the first chair at hand. "Thunder 'n lightnin'!"

"Kit, where's Gabriel?" she inquired of her son. "What's got him!"

"More 'n I can tell ye," he answered, very sullenly. "What's more, 'n I don't care!"

"Good, Kit!" cried out his father, just setting foot with all possible considerateness across the threshold. "Hoor-raw for you, Kit! Who does care for that little Satan, I'd like to know? All he's good for, is jest for your mother to haul 'n maul round; 'n I guess she's had her shear o' doin' that, for this year any way!"

"Tell me this minnit, Nahum Nubbles," screamed his infuriated wife, "what have you done with that boy! Here he was bound out to us reg'lar as could be, right from the poor-house; an' ef he'd but been allowed to git his growth, an' 'd been fed enough to do it, he might ha' got to be useful to somebody! What hev' ye done with him now? I'll find out, depend upon't, ef it costs me—."

"Oh, wal," said he, "when you do, Mis' Nubbles, jes'—jes' le' me know, will ye?" fr I've got some lettle curiosity myself about it!" and his eyes rolled, and leered, and twinkled in all sorts of ways, in his head.

"Did you leave him, Kit?" she asked her son, thinking to have better success in questioning him.

"I s'pose so," said he. "Don't know nothin' about him! Don't care!"

"Did he run away?" she persevered.

"I hope he did! I never want to see him agin—I don't!—little, good-for-nothing, ugly pauper!"

"This is a pretty kittle o' fish, now!" she bawled out, just as her lord and master succeeded in seating him.

self quite emphatically in one of the hard wooden chairs. "Pretty doin's, I sh'd think!"

"G—g—guess you would think so," said Mr. Nubbles, "'f—'f you'd seen what I hev'! Folks 't stay to home ain't apt to see every thing; be they, Kit? eh, Kit?"

"O—o—oh!" grunted he. "Don't know! Don't care!"

At this juncture, for the first time since his coming in, the flaring light from the tallow dip she carried in her hand fell full on the face of her illustrious, but ill-used son. She started with the terror so unwelcome a sight gave her maternal heart.

"Why, Chris-to-pher Nubbles!" she slowly exclaimed, in a higher key than any she had yet attempted. "What's the matter? What on earth's the matter!"

"Ooh!" he returned sharply, as if a sudden pain had twinged him somewhere.

"Tell me this minnit, Christopher! What hev' ye been doin' of to-day, that's scratched an' gouged your face, so? Christopher Nubbles—if I ev-er! Of all things in this mortal world! How d' ye do it, Christopher?"

"Fight'n'," answered his father for him, very laconically.

"Wal, I sh'd think it was a fight'n'! Now you shall jest tell me every single syllable about it all, exactly as it happened! Do you hear, Kit! Tell me the whole on 't, this very minnit!"

"Oh, thunder!" groaned he with pain. O—o—oh!" and he brought down his foot on the floor in a paroxysm of mixed raged and suffering.

"Yis, you'd better tell her all about it, Kit," suggested his father. But still the youth made no reply, manifestly lacking the inclination.

"If I ever!" exclaimed his mother again.

"'R—r—r I either!" Mr. Nubbles managed to get out.

"Who did it now, Nahum? I want to know if you stood by an' see your own son mauled an' hammered in that sort o' way! Who did it, I say?"

"He got to fight'n' with another boy," said Mr. Nubbles, rather softly.

"Got to fight'n' with another boy? But where was you all this time? Where was his own father, that took him away from home to git all mauled up so?"

"Oh, I was 'round, I s'pose," said he.

"'Round, was ye? Wal, and had n't you a good deal better ha' been where you could have helped Christopher out of a scrape when he got imposed upon by them that 's bigger than himself? Mr. Nubbles, I do declare, of all the men I ever did see, I think you're jest the meanest—yis, the very meanest!"

"'Nough said, then," remarked he, in his same quiet and submissive tone. "I've got your 'pinion, hain't I?"

"You're nothin' better than a coward, Nahum Nubbles! a spalpeen! a white-livered, chicken-hearted, lazy, good-for-nothin' fool! That 's what you are—a perfect fool!"

"Good!" he interrupted. "I rather like that, now; I feel as if I could understand ye."

"To stand by an' see your own child, and my own child, too, abused in this kind o' way!—torn lim' from lim' almost!—spit on, all over!—pounded an' scratched!—his eyes drove clear in, so 't I should n't wonder a mite if he never sh'd see agin 's long 's he lived!—Christopher, can you see this candle I've got in my hand?"

But Kit answered her nothing.

"Now jest look o' that boy, will ye? Did ever any

body see such a sight? It's perfectly awful? Did ever a man—yis, a full-grown, able-bodied man—bring home a son to his mother in sich an orful looking plight as this is? Oh, I wish I was only a man myself! You may be pretty sure I'd be apt to make fur fly where some folks now only smooth it down with their hands! If I was only a man!"

"Wish you was," answered he, "f'm bottom my soul!"

"Wish I was, do ye? Wal, let me tell you what's the fust thing I'd do: I'd take you in hand right off! I'd learn you that your own child was n't to be abused an' tore to pieces in this 'ere dreadful, shameful, wicked kind of a way, and you a-lookin' on like a coward, as you are, and a-seein' of it done! That's what I'd learn ye! Now do you know?"

"You 're a-layin' out a good patch o' ground to work over," he suggested.

"You'd know more the next twenty-four hours," she went on, "than you ever knew in any twenty-four hours in all your life! I'd beat it into you if you could n't learn it no other way! I'd either make something of you or else nothing at all!"

"Um!" said he, "I did git Christopher out o' the scrape, as he knows himself. So what 're you jawin' to me about it for? If I had n't ha' done it, most likely he'd been smashed all into a pummice by this time! I dragged him right out o' the ring, by grashus, b' th' hair o' his head!"

"You did, you brute, you? You did?"

"Yes, I did, 'n that's a fact, too. Could n't git him out no other way. He'd been killed dead in a minnit more! I saved his life—just saved it, an' that's all!"

"You saved his life! More like you did him more hurt 'n good, by a long sight. You saved his life, with

your rough old hands in his hair—you brute, you! I don't b'lieve he'll ever git over it as long 's he lives! No, I don't! I don't see how it's any ways possible! Oh, I only wish 't was you, you fool!"

"Hi, old 'ooman. Don't ye, though?"

"Yis, indeed, that's what I do from the bottom of my heart! And if nobody was by to see it, I'd fall afoul of you as you was never fell afoul of yit by man, woman, or child! I'd shut up your eyes for you jest as his are shut up! and jam your old cheeks—what there is left of 'em—into a reg'lar heap! and make you grunt a great deal worse than he does this minnit! Oh, you great fool! lost your bound-out boy; let your own son git half killed by another man's boy; and come home drunk as a beast besides! Oh, I wish for all the world 't I was only a man!"

And upon this the wolfish mother set about reducing the hideous swellings that so disfigured the countenance of her son and heir; while Mr. Nubbles retired stealthily to his well-known apartment to solace himself yet once more with the virtues that lie lurking in Jamaica rum, brown sugar, and a very—very little water.

CHAPTER XV.

GABRIEL AND HIS FRIENDS.

WITH some, whether in town or out of town makes all the difference in the world. It was scarcely a smaller event in the existence of little Gabriel to have passed so unexpectedly from his quiet and monotonous life at Mr. Nubbles's in Worrywitch Hill into the heart of scenes to which he was now introduced.

I have no wish to detain my reader a moment even in rehearsing the divers stages of the boy's progress from the country to the city. It is sufficient to state that, after his abduction from the tent of wild beasts and birds he was spirited along to the furthest outskirts of the tactory village, to a spot where several gamblers with their confederates were assembled, and there kept in safe concealment until evening; at which time he set forward again with two men—one of them the same who had first offered him sympathy and protection, and the other an intimate friend and associate. The former's name, as Gabriel subsequently learned, and as the reader may just as well know now, was Isaac Crankey; while the latter rejoiced in an equally grotesque nominal—Charles Fiily-mug.

Hardened as both these men must certainly have been, they yet seemed to little Gabriel to discover traits vastly more sympathetic and desirable than any he had yet been

able to observe in a single member of the Nubbles family; and the event showed, beyond contradiction, that he far preferred trusting himself in their hands to remaining longer in the old ones.

It was, of course, nothing but a blind confidence on the part of the boy, but just such are very often productive of as much happiness as those that have been carefully studied and shaped beforehand. Besides this, he had no one now to whom to look for counsel in matters of such importance; and the room for wonder is quite small, if, under the pressure of all the circumstances, he should readily yield to the earliest opportunity for relief that presented.

It was up three flights of darkened and narrow stairs, in an old wooden building that slunk exactly into the heart of city obscurity, and around which knotty problems of lanes and alleys and passages offered themselves for the difficult solution of the bemazed traveler, that Gabriel was finally taken. The room itself he lodged in was capacious enough for the service to which it was put, yet small, low, narrow, and in every manner contracted. The windows were dirty, and coated with dust and cobwebs; but within even that precaution against espionage had been carefully secured, others, in the shape of shutters, with solid and heavy bars of wood running across them. Oftentimes the latter were kept up through the whole of the day; at which times Gabriel came to learn that Isaac Crankey kept close quarters, while he sent him out into the public streets either to beg, steal, or in almost any other way amuse himself.

There were but few articles of furniture in the room, and a rough table, a chest, a chair or two, and a cracked stove comprised them; if to these be added further a low bedstead whereon Isaac himself slept, while Gabriel was

directed to make a pallet on the floor. Whatever was cooked Isaac was in the habit of cooking himself. Or he sometimes brought in his food from another apartment near at hand, where lodged a woman that went by the name of Kate Trott. Once, in a long interval, she came into the apartment where Gabriel was housed, giving him an opportunity of gathering some more definite impression of her person and character. She kept her room pretty rigidly, however, receiving visits from Isaac there.

Fillymug was another friend of Isaac's, too, and dropped in on him quite often. Much of their time was passed together, especially at night; and not unfrequently their meetings, whether for counsel or debauch, were protracted until quite daylight.

Gabriel apparently became quite used to these beings, for any very much more exalted had not fallen in his way, even from his earliest youth: yet he was far from being satisfied with the low life that only opened to him in this place. He often repined for that which he had not, and which he never for a moment seriously thought he could have. His heart was unsteady—ill at ease—continually hankering for the sweet and serene peace it did not know. Aspirations that were his only because they were born with him, and that could have belonged honestly to his nature in no other way than by inheritance, now and then spurred his soul till he felt uneasy and unhappy in his present abode; but what could come of them all? What could one like him do in the midst of such a pressure as was upon and around him? Where could he go? How go? With whom? Where would he be likely to find his next friend if he chose voluntarily to discard the one who had offered him such kindness already?

Accordingly he determined not to think of the matter at all, but to try and continue as contented as he could.

It was a hard task, but he would accomplish it. And he thought at the last that he had succeeded.

During the days, therefore, he made himself useful in performing out-of-door errands for Isaac—such, for example, as he was rather anxious not to be seen performing himself, and such, too, as were necessary on those days when he chose to keep himself close within doors. Quite often he began, after a while, to carry verbal messages to Kate, who always met him at her door, and who bestowed trifling tokens of regard upon him that won over his heart very easily. Many a time he had repeated words from Isaac to others, words that his new protector would have trusted on no other lips; but then, he understood nothing of the eventful consequences with which those words might be pregnant, although he received his full meed of praise for doing his work as thoroughly as he did.

Isaac Crankey seemed a very strange and eccentric man, frequently encompassing his ends by means that other men, even of miscellaneous calling, might never think of. He was a hard student, in of course the lowest sense of the term—but his thinking fits cost him many and many times over again what a life of simple honesty would have done. He was by no means a man with a downright vicious look; on the contrary, he had an expression that was conciliatory, if not rather captivating. In and around his numerous haunts in the city his name was pretty thoroughly known, yet not a whit better than was his person. He meant to have an influence wherever he went; and such as it was, he certainly did have one.

His dress was plain, and not unfrequently a good deal the worse for previous use; but such a trifle as that was not suffered to annoy him at all. His usual suit was a

snuff-colored one, with a cap on his head in the place of a hat, and a turn-down collar about his neck, giving him quite a free-and-easy dare-devil appearance; all of which may have had something to do originally with his passage to the heart of his friend and confidant, Kate Trott. He wore bushy whiskers, too, growing all the way round his face, that gave him, at times, a look not a little ferocious. And a sailor's tie was knotted carefully beneath the fold of his collar, making his *tout ensemble* altogether impressive and consistent.

The other—Fillymug—was sinister in his looks. There was little—especially to a boy like Gabriel—that was attractive about him. One of his eyes was partially gone, but enough of the white and sightless eyeball still remained in the socket to be visible whenever he moved it about. He had a long narrow face, but a very wide mouth, filled with teeth that were better called tusks, and that occasioned his lips to protrude in a style not at all consistent with the well-understood lines of beauty. When he spoke it was in a deep and coarse voice that filled the apartment with its unmusical sound. He lounged on the bed, or on the chest, his hat always on his head, while he threw his sprawling and ungainly limbs in whatever direction the whim happened to lead him. Sometimes he kept whittling silently by the hour, occupying his thoughts with his various projects. At other times he seemed determined to let no one talk but himself, even closing the mouth of his more astute friend and ally against his will.

"We'll see!" was the expression he was often wont to wind up his long speeches with. "We'll see!"

Isaac had brought this friendless boy into the city with him, merely because he happened to take one of his odd and unaccountable fancies to him. His youthful face

pleased him—"took his eye," as he expressed it—and that was all there was about it. When he had once safely housed Gabriel in his mean and uncomfortable quarters, he nursed a dim intention of making something of him; he had no definite idea what—but something. If he were to give him a thorough schooling in his own iniquitous practices, he saw that it would be but a very slow and gradual process, and that he could not watch the growing characteristics of his young charge too narrowly.

Therefore he did not think fit to reveal to him at once all that he really intended to do. Placing him right in the heart of such silent influences as he thought would soonest accomplish his work, he was quite content to wait for the pear to ripen before he should offer to pluck it.

Gabriel was threading his way along the narrow lanes in the neighborhood one day, when he fell in with another youngster a trifle older and bigger than himself, but with a manner of perfect self-assurance, who immediately presumed on the liberty of accosting him.

"Wal, how goes it, boy?" inquired the precocious young stranger, giving his short and ragged trowsers a sailor-like hitch at the waist.

Gabriel stood and looked at him in surprise.

"How goes it, I say?" bawled out the sprout a second time, giving Gabriel a knowing wink.

"I don't know," answered the latter, not knowing what he could say.

"Wal, now, you must be a keen 'un! Which way does the wind blow for ye, my boy? How does your money jingle? Carry a 'thimble,' bub? Picked up any 'dummies' lately, eh? Never do such things, do ye?"

No reply from the astonished boy.

"Who air ye, any how? Shiver my young timbers, now, an' pull out all my topsails by the roots, if I know any thing about ye! Why don't you speak, my son?"

The idea of being pertly designated as "my son," by one scarce older or larger than himself, too, seemed to Gabriel the very height of the ridiculous. But for all that he told the young stranger his name.

"Wal, wal, my boy, that 'll do now. Jest remember in futur', will ye, that w'en I speak to ye, Billy Bottles is a-speakin' to ye, an' you'll find, too, that Billy Bottles ain't no very common kind of a chap neither! He's one what's got prospects. Know wot them is?"

Gabriel frankly confessed his ignorance.

"Wal, le' me tell ye, then," said the other. "It's where a feller's got friends, an' sees his way ahead a little; an' knows jest w'en he's called on to do somethin' for himself an' his country. Them's prospects! Now do ye know?"

It was really doubtful if he did know a whit better than before.

"Don't ye never 'touch?'" asked Billy, continuing his slang allusions.

"I don't know," answered Gabriel.

"Ninny! Don't know nothin', do ye? Where was ye brought up? Who do you live with?"

"With Isaac Crankey."

"Isaac!" exclaimed the all-knowing Billy; "the very deuce you do! I know Isaac, jest as well's I know you this minnit! Me an' Ike's the best friends in the world. Come, come down with me into my calaboose! The old woman's out, I guess, and we'll talk it all over there! Come!"

Gabriel scarcely knew what to do in the premises, but stood and reviewed the matter a moment in his mind.

"At any rate," thought he, "this new acquaintance is a lively one, and promises a little better for me than nothing. I'll go with him and look further." So with stimulated curiosity he followed him along.

Billy Bottles was what is sometimes called a "dock-boy;" and a boy more precocious in the way of his calling, it would be a very hard matter to find any where. He told Gabriel that he lived alone with his mother in one of the cellars in that vicinity. So turning suddenly out of the street, and plunging at once into a dark passage-way, along which he alternately groped and stumbled, he at length disappeared in a dark box of a staircase, down into a gloomy basement several steps below.

The place emitted a vile and fetid smell, strong enough to drive away even those much stronger than itself. Garbage had been flung carelessly about in a little half-court, dark and inaccessible, near the alley, and there suffered to decay. The air was thoroughly poisoned with the unwholesome odors, sufficient to breed contagion for the whole neighborhood.

Opening the stained and dirty door, Billy stood back, ushering in his friend with a very wavy motion of his hand, as soon as he entered himself, and could take into his view all the objects within the apartment, he made a discovery that seemed to astonish even him, and that called forth an exclamation from him.

"My eyes now! What a go this is!" said he.

Gabriel peered around the room to learn the cause of all the wonder.

"If here ain't the blessed ole ooman herself, now; and ole Sharkie, too! An' little Jane, three! Good, now! I was a-going to 'tip a bust' ye see, mother, for my young friend here!"—and he pointed significantly over his

shoulder at Gabriel; "but you're all round me, I see! Wat'll a feller do?"

"Do! He'll be civil, Billy," returned the woman whom the youngster had familiarly addressed as Sharkie, as she swallowed another large draught from the thin and smutty tumbler she held in her hand.

"Aha! That I will, ole mother Sharkie!" said he, rubbing the side of his nose with his forefinger, and bestowing on her sundry winks and leers he had but lately learned by dint of laborious imitation. "How's little Jane, to-day?"

"Little Jane" was a small thing that went by that name alone among those who knew her, or her protector, Mrs. Sharkie, and was at that moment curled up on the floor, looking first at Billy's new acquaintance, and then at Mrs. Sharkie, and then at Gabriel, with eyes filled with wonder.

Something about her face there was that challenged sincerest sympathy; for beneath the covering that vicious associations and the foul atmosphere in which she existed, gave her, was partially concealed the real nature she had given her at birth. Manifestly there was a secret history, a history of wrong and cruelty, connected with the child, that perhaps some sympathizing one, at some future time, might be at the pains to unravel. But, poor little creature!—was she sure that that time would ever come?

"Who's your friend, Billy?" asked his mother, already half overcome with the strength and frequency of her vile potations.

"Yes," said he, with a look of low cunning; "quite happy to see ye notice him! Feel much obliged! Fine lookin' chap, eh? His name's Gabriel. 'Gabriel,' he continued, turning to the boy, "won't you be kind enough

to jest speak a word to my mother? She's a sufferin' for somebody to talk to. Sharkie, whenever you're through with that tumbler?"

"Wal, what of it?" she asked, as if she did not understand him.

"Nothin'," said he, "only I'll take it, you know."

And as soon as Mrs. Sharkie could dispose of the little remnant of the mixture, she surrendered the glass to Billy in due form and obediently. He took it from her, and immediately set about mixing a drink, that went with him by the name of "his own partic'ler best." As soon as he had completed all the preparations, he deliberately turned round to the company assembled.

"Ladies 'n' gen'lemen," said he, with a short scrape of his little foot.

"You ha'n't got yer likker too strong, have ye, Billy?" called out his mother, interested a trifle for his internal welfare.

"No, I reck'n not, ole ooman," answered he. "Any how, it's some too late to talk o' that now, as the Irishman said what swallowed the chicken in his egg. Gabriel, my little feller, here's your very good health to-day! May you live to be the gov'ner!"

Mrs. Sharkie laughed outright at the boy's smartness as she always did. "Oh, you're too good, Billy!" screamed she, clapping her hands together. "Did ever one hear the like? Miss Bottles, but ha'n't you got a smart boy there! I wish he was mine. I do, by all I've got above ground!"

"Where do you say you got this boy from?" inquired Billy's mother.

"Picked him up, mother. He was afloat, and so I jest took him in tow; had'n't got no compass, nor no rudder;

I fetched him in here to kind o' see the place, you know. You don't drink any thing my lad, do ye?"

Gabriel modestly assured him that he had not yet arrived at that advanced stage of manliness.

"Oh, wal," said he, turning away, "it's jest as well. A feller need n't begin these things too soon, you know. They're apt to grow into bad habits, by-'n'-by!"

Again Mrs. Sharkie screamed with delight.

"This little feller lives with—with—guess who, mother?" said he.

"Don't know, my son. Who is it?"

"Why, it's Isaac Crankey, an' nobody else! What d'ye think o' that?"

"You don't tell me, now!" and she held up a single hand, tremblingly.

"Yes, I do, though; and I guess Isaac's got a good bargain, too. What do you think about it?"

Mrs. Bottles did not say what she thought about it; but she kept her eyes fixed on little Gabriel for a long time, wondering with herself where Isaac could have had the good luck to fall in with him.

"Did n't expect to find you here, Sharkie," said Billy, strutting rather magnificently toward her, across a short strip of the floor. "No, nor little Jane, neither. It's just as well, though, for all that."

"A'n't sorry we've come, Billy?" asked she, in an exceedingly maudlin way.

"Wal, no, can't 'xactly say 't I am. All well enough, I s'pose. What d' you think o' my friend there?"

"He'll do, I guess. Goin' to give him a bringin' up, eh?"

"P'raps so. I guess he'll let me play schoolmaster a little. Goin' to see Isaac about it; this blessed night, too. Guess I'll get a job out of him."

"Will you, though? I really hope you will now, Billy. Bright boy, you!"

"Oh, mother!" he suddenly broke out. "Le' me tell you a thing or two! I'll tell you all a sight I've seen this very day; an' it's well worth a seein', too."

"What was it, Billy?" both women asked at once, bestowing on him their undivided attention.

"Why, it's the sleepy chap, wot every body all over town's goin' to look at! He's a rare one, I guess! There a'n't another such a one any where round, I know!"

"The sleepin' man?" inquired his mother.

"Yis; he's slep' this five year, stiddy; don't do nothin' but sleep; sleeps as well a-standin' up as I do a-layin' down; ha'n't got no feelin' at all; boys stick pins into him, and needles, jest like a pin-cushion; but the ole feller don't budge an inch! Never see such a animal afore, myself. He's dreadful cold, too, all the time. Don't eat nothin', only when it's put into his mouth, and then you can't hardly see him swaller. They'll stand him up on his feet in the middle o' the floor, and there he'll stan'; he don't stir a step, nor don't offer to. He keeps his eyelids a movin' jest a trifle, an' that's all you can see of it. They open his mouth for him, an' jam his wittles right in like dough; if't wa'n't for that, he'd never eat another hooter; no, not a single crum!"

And upon this, Master Billy looked around on his audience, to see if the impression made by his brief narrative was at all general.

"You've seen lots, in your little life, ha'n't you, Billy?" said Sharkie, quite inclined to court his friendship.

"All o' that," said the boy, in reply. "And I mean this little'un sh'll have a chance, too," pointing to Gabriel, "As soon's his guv'ner gives him over to me!

Can't do much till then. Want a fair field, an' no favors, you know."

When Mr. Sharkie, not long after, made signs of going, Billy began to assume the part of host and entertainer; and talked quite resonantly—for a boy—about her staying a while longer; and of her visit being very short, for her. But he was hardly able to dissuade her from her purpose. "Any how," said he, "we'll come round, some time soon, and drop in on you an' little Jane. I want my friends all of 'em to be acquainted, you know."

"Jes' so, Billy," said she. "Do, now! I wish you would!"

"Won't ye take jest another lit-tle drop afore you go?" asked Billy's mother.

"Oh, now, Bottles!" she exclaimed, feigning modesty.

"Yis, yis; might as well," urged Billy.

So she mixed herself a dram, pledging all those present to its sugary dregs; Master Billy and his friend, especially. Gathering her duds, and taking little Jane under her wing, whose luminous eyes were fixed, as in deep thought, upon Gabriel to the last moment, she asked all present to "git round" as soon as they might find it convenient; and went fumbling her way out through the gloomy passage into the little area.

"Now we'll go," said Billy to his new friend, a minute or two afterward. And Gabriel went out with his brain filled with wonder, and his youthful heart troubled with what he had seen.

CHAPTER XVI.

SCHOOLFELLOWS.

A YOUNG lady stood on the platform at the little railroad station, some dozen or fifteen miles from Draggledew Plain, in the middle of a very warm afternoon, and seemed to be looking about her for assistance. As soon as the train had whizzed off again, and disappeared around the curve in the distance, a man deliberately stepped before her, and asked, "Did you want to go any where, ma'am?"

He was a rough-looking character, stout and stocky, and limped about on his way from the platform to the little hack he kept standing just round the corner of the station. It was hot and uncomfortable standing there in the sand, with the boiling sun right over one; so the young lady told him that she wished to go to Draggledew Plain, and inquired if there might be any means of conveyance at hand.

"Oh, yes, ma'am; I drive right through that place. Got my stage just round the corner. If you'll come with me, ma'am, I'll take your things along for you. This your baggage? Just come with me, ma'am, and we'll be off as soon 's I can get my mail over 't the store yonder." And he seized a trunk and a traveling bag, and marched off as fast as his rheumatic twinges allowed him to the stage.

It was an extremely unique thing for a stage; however, the young lady was assisted in. The easy-souled old driver climbed up after her to the seat in front, between which and her own there was no protecting division, drove round to the post-office, hallooed many times to the man and boy inside to bring out the mail-bags, took them and trampled them hastily under his feet, and hurried away over a quiet country-road, shouting "Ga-lang! ga-lang!" to his pair of jaded and faded sorrel horses for a long, long distance.

He thought he must make himself agreeable, as the entire race of the good old fashioned stage-drivers still continue to think, and as they probably will think to their lives' end. So he turned half about on his seat, and asked his passenger if she had "come fur in the cars?"

Well, yes; she had come from the city, and that was pretty far.

"It's pleasant ridin' in the country now," suggested he, throwing back the soiled crown of his straw-hat to the view of the young lady, and throwing up his face to the sky. "Especially to city folks." He should think more of 'em would come out where they could get fresh water, and fresh air, and fresh other things, and so on. Was she acquainted with any of the people at Draggledew Plain? Yes—eh? Going a visiting, he s'posed? Yes, he had guessed it. The Riverses, eh? Was she related to them? He had heard of them folks, over to Draggledew, and thought they must be pretty nice sort of people.

"Old and intimate friends," added the passenger.

"Ah! Good thing to have friends; go 'long so much pleasanter through the world. Was they rich? He'd heerd somethin' or other about it, he could n't exactly remember what."

"Well, they had been; but Mr. Rivers had been un

fortunate, and was now living a life of retired simplicity."

The old driver recrossed his legs, took another comprehensive look at the sky and over the landscape, and then settled his eyes on the cushion beside him, from which he could, with equal facility, throw a quick glance either at the passenger on the back-seat, or toward the horses before him.

So they rode along; over bare and heated plains, above which wavering columns were continually dancing upward to the sky; down through dark and leafy dells, still fresh with the smell of waters, where the chattering squirrels were making the hollows echo with the sharp ring of their voices; up sandy and steep acclivities facing the west, so that the afternoon sun came full into the brown face of the companionable driver; and through strips and patches of forest border, where the shadows from tall chestnuts and beeches seemed to lay one upon another, dark and thick, like the leaves themselves in late October; till at length there burst upon their view the vision of quiet Draggledew Plain itself.

"Is this it?" she asked, in a sudden and pleasant surprise.

"Yes, marm; this is the place."

The tavern, or public house, was a low and snug building, with a roof long and sharp, and a doorway wide and ample. "Hector Hedge keeps this place," said the driver just as they came in front of the door, "and he'll get you to Mr. Rivers's; I'd go with you myself, marm, and too happy to do it at that"—here he threw her a glance and a smile—"if I had n't got to go another way. My route lays acrost yender," and he pointed in the direction with his whip.

A man of a moderate amount of flesh walked down

from the door to the vehicle. The driver tells him what was wanted, calling him all the time Mr. Hedge. Mr. Hedge looks very squarely at the lady, bows very stiffly, says, "you'll get out here, if you please, marm," and puts forth one his liberal sized hands to assist her down. She is conducted into the little sitting-room, into which a woman and two children conduct themselves likewise, the former to stare and put questions, and the latter to stare and keep their mouths open. And while these processes are going on most successfully, Mr. Hedge himself enters, announcing—"All ready, marm!"

It is a ride of but a few minutes up to the residence of Mr. Rivers, and when the tired traveler comes in sight of the place, of which Mr. Hedge duly informs her, she is greeted by the pleasant and refreshing vision of two girls, dressed in pure white, sitting on the little piazza. Her heart jumps within her for joy.

Before she has had time to leap from the clumsy wagon to the ground both of them are at the gate, and as soon as possible seize upon her with the greediness of true friendship. They did not expect her to-day, else they should have rode over to the village to meet her! They were so very glad she had come! Mary knew she would not forget them just because they happened to be poor! and Martha knew she would not because she felt that her friend's was a nature far above such trifling considerations as those of mere wealth and poverty.

Hector Hedge set the luggage on the piazza and hurried home. Mrs. Hedge immediately began to worry him for intelligence. He gave up what he had, and there stopped. But she was feverish for more. What she had got was merely an appetizer; it made her more and more hungry. She declared she must take some day to go over to "Mr. Rivers's" herself.

"I would," joined in her husband. "You'll be better satisfied, then!"

Whether she did or not does not appear.

Ellen Worthington was an old friend and schoolmate of the girls, and they had looked forward to the visit promised them with a great deal of satisfaction. She was herself possessed of a considerable amount of wealth, having lost both her parents, and being at this day entirely alone in the world, without sister or brother. Her house in town she still occupied, receiving her friends in the same way she always had, and just the same gentle creature she always was to every one. Her heart overflowed when she met these dear friends of hers once more, their circumstances so greatly changed, yet their affection for her in no degree abated. She threw herself into their arms, and fairly wept for joy.

A day or two's rest sufficed to give her a thorough insight into the charms of their present quiet and simple mode of life. The retirement seeming almost sacred; the beauty of the spot itself; the bewildering dreaminess of the scenery—rocks, trees, vines, and waters; the gentle dalliance of those pleasant thoughts with the brain, and of those delightful emotions with the heart, that bring the sweetest happiness while they do not enervate; from all these she drew secret enjoyment many and many times over again.

There was nothing left undone that could be done to render the visitor's dream of happiness complete. Neither parents nor daughters overlooked a single means of adding to her gratification. The country was spread before her in its most winning attractiveness. Every bit of scenery that was worth seeing in that vicinity she was duly carried about to enjoy. Whatever her appetite craved that came from garden, field, or fold, was laid be-

fore her in its most tempting style of cooking or dressing. She praised the air, the sun, the fields, the gardens—she praised every thing. She knew nothing how delightful a country life could be made. She was quite tempted to try a similar change herself; at least for the summer months. Mary said “she would like that, she was sure; but this staying out beyond the confines of civilization all the year, no change, and no relief—bah!”

Martha laughed, and so did Ellen; and between them they made merry times over their discussions of the peculiar pleasures and advantages of a rustic existence.

A few days after her arrival the girls proposed to take a stroll through the village. Glad enough to go, Ellen made herself ready in great haste, and they set out together. They walked slowly along the street, alternately admiring and making their comments, till Martha, almost without the intention of doing such a thing, had led them to the gate of the deaf and dumb girl's cottage. Instinctively she stopped.

“Are you going in here?” asked Mary.

“Yes, if both of you are willing. Why not?”

“What a sweet little place!” exclaimed Ellen. “Why, it's the very miniature of every thing I ever saw! Who lives here?”

“A woman, and a deaf and dumb girl,” answered Martha. “Come, let's go in. They will interest you, I know.”

As they now accidentally caught a view of Alice Morrow standing in the door, they thought they could do no less than go in and sit a few minutes; so Martha led the way.

Alice seemed delighted to greet her new friends again, and stooped down and kissed Martha. Mary was rather more shy with her advances, and the girl did not feel so

free with her; but it was apparent that Martha she regarded already as a sister. They went in, and grouped themselves in that same little parlor—Mrs. Polly, Alice, and all. There is no telling how snug they looked there. There is no knowing how very diminutive each one seemed suddenly to grow, keeping such exact proportion with the dimensions of every thing around them. It was something as if you should reverse your lorgnette and look at people through the wrong end.

Martha put the woman many questions respecting Alice, such as how she employed her time, what were her commoner thoughts, what was her usual frame of mind, and other subjects of like character; and it interested them all very deeply to see with what intense attention the mute watched the countenance, the eyes and the lips, alternately of Martha and of Mrs. Polly. She looked as if at moments she really must speak; her beautiful eyes did speak that silent language that long and long afterward haunts the sensitive imagination, and echoes melodiously along the winding passages of the memory.

Several times did Martha glance at her friend Ellen during the progress of the interview, and each time she could not fail to observe that her countenance wore an expression of deep and strong excitement. What could be the meaning of it she was unable to divine. The interest that Ellen appeared to feel in the stranger was so sudden and so deep that to Martha it seemed unaccountable.

At length Alice went out of the room, and in a minute or two returned with a paper slate. On this she proceeded to write what she wished to communicate. But her sentences were only for Martha's eyes. She seemed to have fastened on her for a confidant from the beginning.

Handing the slate, therefore, to Martha, and bestowing

on her a highly intelligent smile as she did so, the latter took it and read :—

“I love to see you here so much. Your face makes me always happy. I love to have you bring all your friends besides. I call you in my heart my sister. Pray come and see me often, dear sister. I want some one to live near me all the time. I want to walk with you some time in the fields and woods, and enjoy all that you enjoy. Will you come often to see me? Will you let me call you my dear sister?”

The perfectly innocent candor that breathed in this simple communication struck a chord in the heart of Martha that had hardly vibrated so vigorously before. In a single moment, by the bound, as it were, of a single uncontrollable impulse, she felt that her love threw its arms instantaneously around the object that so deeply yearned for its caress, and that she was already quite a sister to the orphan, even as she had fondly wished. She there-upon wrote in few words sentiments fully in sympathy with those of Alice, and with an indescribable look of pleasure, handed her back the slate.

The agreeable talk was pursued still further by the three girls, to whose numerous inquiries Mrs. Polly returned thoughtful answers, expressive alike of her gratitude for their attention and her proper appreciation of their sympathy. She let them confidentially, as it were, and with an air of such simple and unaffected confidence too, into the little secrets of the daily life of Alice, entertaining them with relations of her manner of roaming about to tend her favorite plants in the garden and yard, her sitting alone with her thoughts in the shade of some particular tree, and the various ways in which she was accustomed to express the many-hued emotions that chased each other across her soul.

Unwilling still to break the charming delight of such a dream, the girls nevertheless felt that they would at some time be compelled to leave, and therefore soon rose with that intention. Mrs. Polly, in her plain but perfectly honest way, thanked them every one for their kindness, and urged them to call again, and as often as they walked that way; while Alice, her face alive with happiness and radiant with the joy that stirred in her heart, went round shaking hands in silence with each, and smiling on them all as they thought none but she could smile.

They withdrew with the happiest of impressions; and as they strolled back over the broad border of turf that skirted the road, walking slowly through the great figures of shadows that the elms and maples threw down at their feet, they secretly felt that their natures had been imperceptibly elevated by the scene through which they had gone, and that not the least of the lessons they had that day learned was the very necessary lesson of complete contentment. The humble little cottage had suddenly become as a blazing beacon set on the very top of a hill.

Rambling whithersoever the inclination led them, they turned away from the main street of the village, and after a walk of a few minutes, discovered that they were close upon the grave-yard. Martha proposed going in. Her sister said No, at once. But Ellen was desirous of roaming for a little while in a place so hallowed in all her associations, and they accordingly went through the gateway. They coned the letters that told the names and the ages of many of the dead, reading in tones sympathetically low and solemn. Around the humped mounds they straggled, among the long grasses that made sighing harp-strings for the winds, and the coarse blackberry vines that run riot over many and many an unmarked grave. Ellen was sad and thoughtful; and her companions sought not to break

the influence of the feeling that surrounded her. She seemed to choose loneliness, wandering away by herself. Martha, whose acute sympathies were wedded to perceptions equally quick, thought she detected her once in the act of weeping, as she bent down to spell the lettering on a weather-stained head-stone; and struggled with her own generous impulse to go and sit down beside her, and mingle her tears with the tears of her orphan friend. But she resisted the desire, and suffered Ellen to remain uninterrupted.

They finally came along to the brow of a slight declivity, whose slope was dotted thickly with grassy hillocks. Unperceived by her as yet, they saw a woman in the act of kneeling over a grave with a gray stone at each of its ends, and scattering wild flowers upon it profusely from head to foot. She had already given the grave the appearance of a bed of roses.

Neither of them would have been rude enough or thoughtless enough to invade the sacred privacy of her affectionate grief, but there they suddenly found themselves, and found themselves equally unable to withdraw. And while they still stood in doubt, their feelings wrought sensibly upon by the sight that presented itself, she finished the errand of love on which she had come, and at last took the path away from them, that wound down among the thick graves into the little valley.

But while she had remained, she had given them an opportunity to observe enough to fix her in their memories as long as they lived. Her face, which was but partially averted from them, was wrinkled and marked with age; while, if even that additional proof were needed, her gray hair, parted with such nicety over her temples, told them still more truly that her years were many. And the manner in which she proceeded to strew her flowers over

the ridge of that humble mound, spoke more than a thousand tongues could have spoken for the depth and the sanctity of her heart's consuming grief. She clasped her hands above the grave, and lifted her eyes fervently to heaven; and Martha felt sure that she saw glittering tears drop among the scattered flowers, to exhale with the fragrance of her simple offerings to the blue sky that bent over her in protection.

Soon after she left the spot, the three girls went down in silence, as if their movement had been simultaneous, to read the inscription on the gray headstone. Kneeling in the long grass, while the sweet odors of the flower-offerings refreshed them, they read as follows:

"MRS. PRUDENCE FERGUSON,
RELICT OF JONATHAN FERGUSON,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
IN THE BLESSED HOPE OF A BETTER,

June 11th, 1793,

Æt. 34."

"Oh, death! where is thy sting?

Oh, grave! where is thy victory?"

And thus, as they afterward learned, had this woman with gray hairs and stooping form regularly gone to the grave of that mother who died in her earliest youth, year in and year out; her affection never dying away, but rather waxing stronger and stronger, and burning brighter and brighter; the tenderness of her early grief still as marked as when in the prime of her life she for the first remembered time wore the little suit of sable; her heart even now—far apart as this and that dear old time were—yearning like the heart of a sorrowing child for the embrace of her sainted mother!

The old woman, herself waiting for the final summons,

come to weep and to strew flowers upon the grave of the mother long ago'dead ! The weary pilgrim, sitting down by the graves that line the wayside, and recalling to her vision the face of the single loved one, loved even to idolatry ! The child's heart still a child's in the bent body ; the early love burning as it burned in the day of bitterness and despair ; the innocent faith, grown greater with each revolving year, reaching forward, looking upward, till it had almost come to the threshold of the Good Father's house itself, across which all became but members of one glorious household !

CHAPTER XVII.

NONESUCH.

It was not an apple, exactly, if it was a nonesuch. It was quite a different species of fruit; whether fully ripe or not I am sure I can not say; whether pleasant or not to the taste is simply a matter to be left with the reader's judgment; and whether of a great amount of consequence in any way or no, a very few pages, with my kind reader's favor, will be quite sufficient to show.

The girls were sitting chatting pleasantly together in the parlor one afternoon, one trying to sew, another to embroider some trifling article, and a third turning over the leaves of a book that lay in her lap, when a shadow very unexpectedly fell across the floor, and an unfamiliar voice gave notice of the presence of an individual for whom they had made no preparation.

"Ah, yes! Good afternoon, ladies!" said he, holding his white beaver carelessly in his hand, while he slid quite as carelessly into a convenient chair. "Thought I'd take a little walk, such a pleasant day," wiping his forehead with a white handkerchief that he drew out at enormous length and with corresponding slowness; "very warm, too; I declare I hardly ever *see* such changeable weather. But one feels paid for his walk, when he gets out here. What a beautiful place you have got here! 'Tis beautiful! None such any where else 'round here

None such in any town I've ever been in. I declare 'tis beautiful! All busy this afternoon, I see! ha, ha, ha! Ladies always will be doing something. Never see the like of them in all my life. I laugh with some ladies that I'm acquainted with here and there about the country, and tell them I don't see what they always find to do; but that don't seem to make no kind of difference with 'em. They always have kept busy at it and they always will."

The girls at first looked up at him in blank astonishment, then at one another, and afterward at him again. What to make of it passed their comprehension. What to do, they none of them knew. And they held their peace, from nothing but the overwhelming surprise that made them dumb.

There he sat loungingly in his chair, the very personification of *nonchalance*, and as perfectly at home as if he had been living in the house from the day the carpenters delivered up the key and carried away their tools. His name was Dandelly. It was warm summer weather, and he was dressed, as he was wont to dress in that season, in a suit of pure white. His pantaloons and coat were white, and so was his vest. About his thick and gross neck he had folded a white cravat, not exactly immaculate to be sure, yet tied with a skill that he evidently considered more than a compensation for crumpling and soiling together. His hair was black, and carefully curled in little ringlets, which he was at untiring pains to adjust to a suitable and effective fall about his neck and over his ears, and arranged with what he could not help thinking a killing grace over his high and narrow temples. On the top of his pear-shaped head, they were twisted and tangled, wriggled around and corkscrewed about, till there seemed to be nothing there but a living and thriv-

ing bed of little ringlets. He felt so completely satisfied with himself, too, that even the famous Beau Brummel would have been in his eyes any thing rather than an object of envy.

There he sat loungingly in his chair, sticking out his varnished leather shoes, and toying his black mustache with his thumb and finger. His eyes, which unfortunately for their fair expression were quite small, seemed to try to brighten, but they barely made out to twinkle only, like very small stars in a very far-off sky. He laughed and smiled, became sober or vivacious in a shorter time than one would be in the telling of it; and rattled on with his own talk like the light jouncing of a springless wagon over a rough and stony road.

“What beautiful flowers you’ve got here, ladies! I’d heerd a good deal about them, bnt I’d never been to see them before. Perfectly beautiful, I declare! Perfectly exquisite!”—and here he took an instinctive snuff, as if he had a fresh bouquet right under his nose. “I’ve been in Mr. Law’s garden over at Millbrook—perhaps you don’t know Mr. Law’s folks, though?—very fine family indeed, several young ladies there; you all make me think of ’em much. I’ve spent a g-r-e-a-t deal o’ time there; they always want me to be there when they have company from abroad; they’re folks that have a good deal of company, you see; I always arrange the tables for them, when they have parties, but they hav’n’t made any parties lately; got quite a pretty conservatory there; think you’d like to see it, ladies; you’d like to go over there; should be very happy to introduce you to the young ladies, as they’re particular friends of mine.”

Here he came up to the surface to breathe, and all three of the girls simultaneously lifted their eyes to him again. Their faces had been red at first, possibly with

embarrassment ; now they could scarcely refrain from titling outright in their strange visitor's presence.

"Not much acquainted about here yet, I conclude?" he went on. "Oh, well ; time enough yet. Folks hereabouts ain't very hard to get acquainted with, as you'll find out for yourselves. But I've heard a good many say they'd like to know you all ; they think you're rather distant, I guess—ha ! ha ! ha ! But I s'pose you don't care what they think ; I should n't, I am sure."

Mary assured him that they said nothing about such things, and wished to say nothing. She spoke very curtly.

"Oh, well," said he, not a particle daunted by her pointed reproof, "then I've nothing to say. I only thought I'd walk over and call on you, and look round and see your place a little. I have so many acquaintances in all the towns here and there, it's really hard getting round to them ; especially as I have to go on foot when I can't catch a ride with some one else, or take the stage between one town and another. I promised the Laws I'd come over there, this week ; but I don't see how I can, though they're very fine young ladies, I assure you. I wish you'd but get acquainted with 'em. I will introduce you to them, some time. I've got to go down to Bradbury as soon's I can get there, to see Mr. Perkins's folks ; I promised 'em. Perhaps you don't know Mr. Perkins ? He's member of Congress for that district, and they live in good style there, I can assure you. I've visited there a great deal. His daughter Josephine and me ha' always been intimate friends ; nothing more than that, you understand ! ha ! ha ! She's a sweet girl, Josephine is. Ah, but you ought to know her ! so gentle like, so—so—so nothing at all but goodness ! and such angelic ways ! Every body is in love with her, and I'm

not ashamed to say I am myself! ha!—ha!—ha! Oh, yes; you must see her, surely. Perhaps you'd get invited to one of her parties, by and by, for she has a good many of them!"

"Really!" exclaimed Mary. "Quite a con-sid-e-ra-tion, is n't it, sir?"

He sent his fingers a-rambling swiftly, like frightened chickens, through the bed of ringlets atop of his head, and let his eyes take two or three good little twinkles that must have given them a vast deal of satisfaction.

Martha and Ellen could not help laughing in each other's faces.

"Yes—y-e-s," said he, quite slowly, stroking his glossy mustache for a moment, and appearing to be a very little ways gone in thought; "little as you'd think it—Mr. Perkins being a member of Congress, and all that—they're not aristocratic folks at all, I can tell you; they're plain people, high up in the world as they are. I like them all the more for that. I don't want any thing to do with your stuck-up people—ha! ha! I don't make any pretensions myself, and I'm sure it's not very pleasant to see others do it! I wish I was going to be in town here for all the summer; but I can't, for I've made an engagement with a friend to meet him at Saratoga pretty soon, as soon as the season begins. Ever in Saratoga? Never was myself, but have heard it was such a beautiful place—perfectly enchanting—perfectly delightful! And the company that flocks there! and the parties they have at the great hotels!—and the music, and the dances, and waltzes, and all that! Do any of you waltz, ladies? I consider I'm something of a waltzer myself. Very fond of it, especially if you happen to get hold of an agreeable partner, ha! ha! But you ought to go to Saratoga, if you've never been. Hav'n't you never, neither of you?"

"We have all seen the place," answered Mary for the rest, her lip curling with irony.

"Ah, you have, then! Of course I need n't say any thing about it. Need n't tell you what I've seen and done there, when I get back!" He stared at them vacantly, as if they had suddenly risen in his estimation by a jumping bound of at least a hundred feet. "Hope I shall have a good time there, 't any rate. Wish some of you were going, or all of you. Should like to meet with you there. Think we could have a fine time of it. Not quite so lovely there as 'tis here, I guess—ha! ha! What do you think of the town, ladies? Do you like your new location? Got used to it yet? You're pleasantly situated here, I declare. And your garden is fine. How beautiful them flowers smell out in the bed yonder! What do you call 'em? Got a man to tend your garden, or do you do it yourselves? Garden work's very healthy work for ladies, but I think it's none too clean for their fair hands, ha! ha!"—and he carelessly spread out and glanced at the backs of his own, which, by the by, hardly held their own by comparison with the whiteness of his linen coat. "Mr. Perkins keeps a fine garden, and so do the Laws. They have gardeners, I believe. Every thing always looks nice and true; so purty!"

Martha began a conversation with Ellen about some knitting she was engaged upon.

"What kind of work is that?" said he, indefatigable as ever, and reaching forward in his seat to get a better view. "Oh, it's knotting, is it? Very beautiful work, so soft and delicate for a lady's fingers. Nothing so purty as knotting. A friend of mine does a good deal of that; Miss Burr—a very particular friend she is, and a very fine young lady, too. Wish you knew her; you'd be pleased with the acquaintance. What is that figure you're work-

ing at there? Perhaps I can help you about it; I know something about such things; more'n folks think. I make caps, sometimes. I can make a cap as handy as any woman. Do it very often, always make Mrs. Perkins's, trimmin's and all. She says she don't want no better hand. I guess I could astonish you with my skill at such things! And vases, and baskets of pine-burrs, and melon seeds, and boxes of pasteboard and mosses, and crosses, and pyramids of shells—out of red putty and little sea-shells—you've seen 'em!—and lounges, and ot-tomans, and crickets, and every thing else! There's only a little, ladies, that I can't do!—ha! ha!"

"You must be a very useful person in some families," suggested Mary, dryly.

"Ah, Miss Rivers! that's what I am! There's very few that can well beat me! I'll take you into Mrs. Perkins's parlors—she has two parlors, you see—and I'll show you things that I've made, and that I've fixed, till you'll be hardly willing to believe me."

"I dare say," returned Mary.

He did not quite comprehend what she meant. So he sent his fingers on another exploring excursion through his bed of ringlets, and twinkled his eyes at her vacantly. Then he resumed his rattle—

"Wish the people 'round here were at all lively. Dullest folks I ever did see! just the dullest! Why can't somebody get up a picnic here, once in a while, or something of that sort? There's so much fun, and all that, to be had in the woods, running 'round any where you want to. Ever attend many picnics, ladies? Grand good things, ain't they, though? Always have 'em over to Millbrook, 'most every Fourth of July. Never enjoyed myself so much in all my life as I did the last Fourth. Every body was there, and they had every thing to eat,

too. I helped set the tables ; helped ? I had charge of about the whole of it ! Every body admired them ; and I arranged all the flowers just as tastefully as I could, tulips, and daffies, and roses, and geraniums, and hyacinths, and oh, such great white lilies ! I wish you could have been over there ; you'd have enjoyed it so much !

Mary showed symptoms of increasing impatience. She found that she had met with one individual whom neither satire nor menace itself—that is, such gentle and reprov-ing menace as ladies are privileged to use—could drive from his position. A person more perfectly at his ease, and more thoroughly indifferent to satirical speeches, the whole country round could not have furnished. Addicted to feminine talk and feminine pursuits, he was ambitious to become distinguished in no other. Nothing suited him better than to take a half-hour or so for the purpose of describing the dress of a particular young lady at a particular ball, soirée, or party. In the enumeration of the long list of ladies' equipments, embracing those from the top of the head to the very tip of the foot, he energetically put forth all his mental powers, and reveled in the thought that his familiarity with such topics made his personal presence highly desirable in every little social clique that was formed.

He was a man-milliner. He was a hybrid of a creature, like nothing at all that had ever before been seen. The more pains you were at to show your thorough disgust for him, the more determined he seemed that you should be altogether delighted with him. If you spoke chastising words to him—words that would drive any ordinary *dog* from your presence—he simply became sycophantically meek, and held himself ready to lick your hand whenever you should extend it. How *could* such a being be shaken off ?

Mary tried satire—and her satire was sharp stuff, too—but to no purpose. Instead of feeling in the least abashed or humiliated, he simply bestowed his attention on the other two, as if he would leave her out of his calculation entirely.

Martha was rather better-natured about it. Perhaps she had a little more tact in getting along with such strangely-disagreeable beings. She was patient with him, even while his presence was most offensive. The abundance of her native good-humor—blessed gift to mortals!—led her rather to enjoy than to dissect and criticise. He offered her a fund of enjoyment. It was quite as good as a raree show for her. So she sat and laughed, sometimes replying to the hasty interrogatories of the strange gentleman, and sometimes breaking out with an odd and quizzical remark to Ellen, the eyes of both of them glistening with nothing in the world but pure fun alive.

Mr. Dandelly was by profession—well, he was a little of every thing. The peculiar requisites to success in every known human calling, if his own ingenuous statements were to be received without a suspicious and naughty reservation, were settled and centered most strangely in him. He could paint, and he could hang paper. A more skillful hand with a fine cambric needle, laces, ribbons, and the like of these things, was not to be discovered, except with great difficulty and after traversing a large extent of territory. And he was all the time traveling. How he managed to do it the wisest of people did n't know. Who defrayed his expenses was a problem more difficult of satisfactory solution than even the entangling and brain-perplexing hieroglyphics on the case of an Egyptian mummy. There was no one that he did not know, and hardly a spot that he said he had not seen. He was most happy to converse on subjects of all natures,

and not less ready and fluent on abstruse than on everyday topics. You could not catch him in the trap of a surprise; not that he was "too smart" for every body, but because he would not be surprised. He had no conception of what such a feeling, with the attendant feeling of humility, was.

Whatever might be the uneasiness of the girls under this unlooked-for infliction, he was not at all troubled. He had enjoyed nothing more for a long time. And still lounging in his chair, and still holding his white beaver in his hand, he regarded the persons, the language, and the whole appearance of the three friends with a coolness that was a full match for any effrontery ever known or recorded. It was not until Mary finally left the room, and refused stubbornly to return, that he expressed himself as having staid longer than he really meant to, and got up to go. He assured them he should make them another call sometime before he left for the spring, and repeated his wish that they might become acquainted with the many very fine friends to whom he always stood ready to introduce them.

Bidding them good-afternoon, he hit his toe against the corner of the outer door, crushed his hat shockingly against the post, scattered his fallen-down ringlets over his eyes, and passed out through the gate as carelessly as if that were exactly the way he took his leave every where he went.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OLD APPLE-DEALER.

ON the corner of one of the city thoroughfares stood a lean and pitiable object, the picture of a broken-hearted man. He looked as if he must once have seen better days, faded and thin as his garments were, and wrinkled as was his countenance. His limbs were small and attenuated; his coat much mended, though it showed signs of having been in the hands of a careful and experienced person, who well knew how to make trifling things go the furthest. The hat he wore had grown old and venerable in service, much of the nap being quite gone, and a distinct mark running round the corner of the crown. He held his hands clasped together, occasionally rubbing their dried and wrinkled skin, and glanced now at the little stock of fruit in his stall, and now at the ceaseless throng of passers, whose feet left no prints upon the pavement.

All day long he had been there before his stall, silent and patient. The seal of a great sorrow was set on his forehead, while he pondered and pondered over what he saw. When the noonday sun fell hot across the pavement he retired within the shade of the great stone building at hand; and there, in his retirement, he kept close counsel with his harrowing thoughts, and vainly watched to see some passer stop at his stall for a few pennies' worth of fruit. As the afternoon shadows began to trail

their lengths along the street, he again renewed his place by his stall, and appealed by his silent look alone to the charitable patronage of those who went by.

Nobody, however, seemed to think of him. Nobody noticed that there was such a being in the world. He did not seem to count as much as one, standing there so meekly. If it had been a beautiful girl now, it might have been different. But an old man, in seedy garments, a bad hat on his head, and wrinkles deeply furrowed over his face—that was another thing. Pity is a something that needs a little coaxing. Charity is not always what it pretends to be, either; sometimes rooting itself in the hot-bed of the passions, and taking the form of selfishness, and even of crime.

The patient man looked up the street and down the street. It was the time when the crowds were going home for the night, and he knew that his prospects of trade were now every moment dwindling away. And hoping still for the best, he consoled his spirits with his usual study of the faces and figures that time had made familiar to his gaze.

That man in nankeen trowsers and glossy black frock coat, striking his ivory-headed cane so heavily on the pavement, and sometimes humming snatches of old and homely tunes—he knew that he was a large dealer in wool. His rotund form, his broad shoulders, his cheeks streaked richly with red, all proved that he loved the delights of the table and did not slightly pay his devotions thereto. There came another; he knew him to be an auctioneer. His eyes showed it. His lips, and cheeks, and whiskers, and thick double-chin showed it too. He played with his massy watch-seals, appearing to look neither to the right hand nor the left, but crowding his way straight along home. And then a man whom he knew to be a

shipper, an extensive merchant, whose name and fame had gone across the waste of the great waters. He was slight and spare. His eyes were small, and blue, and very expressive. His thin and colorless lips were tightly shut, as if he were at that moment in the act of carrying forward a bold determination. The apple dealer often followed him in his thoughts for a long while, clothing his character with many of the most vivid colorings an active imagination could supply.

They came now in streams and torrents, and now singly and in regular file. Every one had his eyes fixed apparently upon some object before him. The faces of all wore the deep brand of business. None seemed to be looking forward to blissful reunions in the household, to pleasant summer evening gatherings on retired piazzas in the rear of their dwellings, or the kiss and the embrace of loving and confiding children. There was the hardness of the reality on every countenance. None went smiling by. None averted their faces to glance in at the windows, or to exchange pleasant looks with friends. If two spoke, they did so in a hard, dry way, and pushed on as if not a moment was to be lost. The only sounds that fell on the poor man's ears were the rolling and rattling of the carts and omnibuses—and the everlasting shuffle—shuffle—shuffle of feet upon the pavement. He threw his eyes up at the cornice of a high building on the other side of the street, and there saw the sun gilding every object with its own glory; then he dropped them to the ground again, and saw the darkened, hardened, selfish countenances of his fellow-creatures, and he heaved a deep, a long sigh, in spite of himself.

At last the throng began to diminish. The street was putting on the quiet of evening, and people went by but scatteringly. No one had stopped to make ever so

trifling a purchase ; no being of all that great crowd had thought of the wants of the poor man's heart. He was about to take away his stock in trade for the night, desponding and unhappy.

"What shall I come to !" exclaimed he, half aloud, still looking up and down the street, and hoping even against hope itself. "I can't get along so. I must do something else. But what shall I do ?"

As if she had heard his self-questioning, a girl with a pale face, but bright with the pleasant feelings that nestled about her heart, jogged his elbow just at that moment, saying as she did so :

"Ah, Mr. Brindall ! you hav'n't sold quite all your fruit yet, have you ? Well, I am glad enough of it, for I want some good nice apples, and here they are, sure enough, aren't they ? Well now, how much for half a dozen of these best ones ? Here 's your money for them. Hav'n't had as good luck as usual, to-day, have you ? Oh well, I would n't be down-hearted about it, I 'm sure. Brighter days ahead, you know. Come, Mr. Brindall, how much for these ?"

The dealer in fruit looked at her a minute out of tearful eyes, and taking her gently by the arm, said, "How can I ask you any thing for them ? I've sold little enough to-day, I know ; but if I never expected to receive another cent, how could I take money from you ? You've been too good to me already, Fanny !"

"Oh, well, but we 'll say nothing now about that. I've done nothing that I 'm ashamed of, and nothing that I would n't be very glad to do again. It is n't much that 's worth talking about. There ; I'll take these, Mr. Brindall, if you 'll let me ; how much ? Will that pay you ?" and she handed him twenty cents in two silver pieces.

"Pay me ? Yes, Fanny. I don't want to be paid in

such a way, though. I'm not going to take your money from you; it's hardly enough earned, Heaven knows. I should feel myself almost guilty of robbery if I did such a thing as that. No, Fanny; you're perfectly welcome to them, and as many more as you like."

"But I can't take them unless you let me pay for them. Is there money enough?" said she, again taking up the bright pieces she had laid down on his little stand.

"Money enough? Yes, and a good deal more, too. I can't take that, at any rate. Don't make me take any, I beg of you."

But to this she would not listen. Unless he took the full price for his fruit, she refused to have any thing to do with the purchase. And he was obliged to yield, charging her two cents apiece for the large last year's greenings, while she finally concluded that she would take ten, just her money's worth. He offered to throw in a couple more, to make out a full dozen; but she firmly declined receiving them, saying that she would have to ask him to help eat what she had bought already.

"And now if you're ready," said she, pulling together her little shawl, "why not go home with me? You'll hardly find much more custom to-day. It's getting toward evening, and you look tired besides. Come, Mr. Brindall, why not go now?"

He thought of it a half minute, and then concluded that he would. So he swept his little stock in trade into his basket, and started along with his youthful friend and sympathizer.

A fair face was the young girl's, yet pallid almost to frightfulness. Her short life had had nothing of the dream in it yet; it had been full of nothing but grinding and wearing realities. It had been one long continuous "stitch—stitch—stitch;" the needle constantly going—

the thread drawing steadily through—the weary head bent down to the work, as if eyes, heart, and brain must all be on it at the same moment. She was tidily, but cheaply clad, in a neat and tasteful print, with a plain hat on her head, and a pretty shawl over her shoulders; but all the dressing and decking in the world would not have helped to express that strange medley of opposite feelings, that made her face little less than a speaking book. Grief and joy sat on that youthful countenance together, and so did anxiety and hope, and love and fear; and extreme tenderness of feeling, and high and undying resolution. It was a strange face for so interesting an one; and beneath the shade of that cheap straw, it was made to express what in all likelihood it would not beneath silk, crape, or lawn.

They chatted, or rather she chatted, as they went along the street homeward, anxious to raise her companion's drooping spirits. She talked of the many objects that here and there attracted her; perhaps of no great importance in themselves, but just such trifles as might suffice to fill his troubled mind with other and less grievous thoughts. Sometimes he replied to her, and sometimes he did not. More than one person turned round to look after a couple so oddly matched, and more than one person, in a moment afterward, dismissed the vision from his mind altogether. So goes the world with us all. Now we go, as the song says, up—up—up; and now we go down—down—down. The ups never stop long to throw away pity on the downs. It makes them too dizzy, the mere contemplation of their own unexpected height.

When they reached the end of their walk, the man appeared to be tired enough. He could hardly lug his basket of fruit up the steps.

They came to a gloomy and darkened area, where an

outside flight of wooden stairs conducted them to the second story of a back building, on which floor they lived. Fanny took the key from her pocket, unlocked the door, and led the way in.

"Now I want you to come and get your tea just as soon as you can, Mr. Brindall," said she; "for I know you must be tired, and hungry, too. So don't wait to fix much; my supper's all ready now."

"But I feel as if I had n't earned my supper," said he, turning round upon her with his hand still on the latch of his door.

"Well, if you have n't, I have, then; and so I invite you to come and sit down with me. Don't wait, now. I'm expecting you right along." And she went into the apartment opposite the one he entered.

It was a snug and pretty room, if it did look out on nothing but an area. She opened the windows, to let in the cool air of the evening. As she moved briskly around the apartment, her eyes sparkled with pleasure, while her lips insisted on making melody to the joyful beating of her heart. She was only a poor friendless seamstress, to be sure; simply one of these weary stitchers whose stitches carry them too soon to their quiet graves; yet she was happy, and that was enough. She had many a-time seen sadder female faces, young faces, too, looking out into the streets through large and costly windows, than hers had ever been when she looked out in chill wintery afternoons into the cramped little court that formed her prospect.

So, singing and smiling, she went on with her simple preparations for supper. Mr. Brindall came in, rubbing his hands slowly together, and sat down at the window. Fanny did all she could to cheer him up, talking to him and putting him questions; till all things were in readi-

ness at last, and they moved up to the table, taking seats opposite each other.

"This cup of tea, now," said she, in a pleasant tone that was quite bewitching, "is going to do you a great deal of good, Mr. Brindall; and you must n't say it is n't. I want you to drink it all, and then pass your cup for more. Now I'll thank you for the bread, if you please. I made this bread myself; I'd got tired of baker's bread, and thought you must be tired of it by this time, too. And there is some nice, fresh, yellow butter; it looks as if it had come from the pleasant country this very day. Help yourself now, Mr. Brindall. I sha'n't like it at all, if you don't make a good hearty meal. These are long days, you know, especially for those who are gone from morning till night."

"Ah, yes, dear Miss Fanny! Long days indeed! But if I could but do a little better, they'd seem all the shorter. Nothing seems to go right with me. The curse is not off of me yet, I fear! I can't tell any body what it is; but this strange—strange feeling; it is eating my heart away; it makes me despondent all the time; my hopes are gone, and every thing else seems to have gone with them."

"You mustn't talk so, Mr. Brindall," said Fanny; "I insist upon it, you must n't. It does you no good. It does you a great deal of hurt. Now please eat your supper, will you? Look at the bright side of things. You've seen the dark side long enough."

"Bless you, Miss Fanny," he returned, feelingly, "it is only yourself that bids me hope for better things. Why will no one else do so? Why is the world so closely leagued together against—against—you know what I mean, Fanny! you know what I mean!" and the tears stood in his eyes, while he took another piece of white and nice bread from the plate she again passed him.

"How do you know that people are leagued against

you, Mr. Brindall? How do you know it isn't all suspicion? Don't you judge the world too hard, now?"

"And, what if I really should? Could I be more uncharitable to others than they have been to me? Ah, Miss Fanny! how very little you know about these things, after all!"

"Well, if I know so little about matters that make one so very unhappy, why, I am glad of it; that's all. And I hope I shall know less, before I do more. Now don't let such things spoil your appetite, Mr. Brindall. I sha'n't feel as if I was a good housekeeper, unless you do more justice to my supper. Come, now, eat all you can. It's been a long day for you, you know."

"Yes, and for yourself as well, I should think," added he. "What do you do here but work—work—work, all day long, from early morning till dark again?—and work, too, to support me—a hearty, healthy man! I dependent on a poor girl like yourself! Oh, shame on me, that it is so!"

"It's no such a thing, Mr. Brindall; and you know it isn't! I don't support you. You support yourself. I only made a little arrangement with you about your board; but what is that? What is it more than what people do every day in the week? You pay your board, don't you, Mr. Brindall?"

"Well, I want to; but I'm afraid that'll be about all there is to it. Yes; I try to pay my board—that is, when I can."

"And when you can't, what is the use of having any thing said about it? If you can't, you can't; and there's the end of it. But I'm sure, Mr. Brindall, you have done very well, so far."

"But I sometimes think I do wrong in accepting your kindness so freely. I'm sure, I don't know when or how I can return it. It's hardly right for me to take advantage in this way of another's generosity."

“When I’m not satisfied, you may depend on my letting you know it,” said she. “I certainly shall then, but not before. But what is the reason of so much anxiety about such trifling things? Here I live, without a single friend in the world, unless it is yourself. It’s very natural that I should like at least one friend, I think; isn’t it? And I feel toward you as if I could call you ‘father.’ Really, now, I believe I will call you father for the future. I wonder I had n’t thought of it before! And will you call me your daughter?”

He slowly set down the cup of tea he held in his hand, looked at her across the table with grateful eyes, and said nothing. He would have spoken, but his lips trembled. It seemed to him that both eyes and ears were deceiving him. He thought it could not be possible—he the broken and bowed man, the outcast, the scorned and neglected one of mankind, voluntarily called by that endearing title “father,” once more, and by one from whom, of all others, he would least have expected sympathy! Ah, yes, Mr. Brindall; but it is only from those who themselves have at some time suffered, that the truest and the deepest sympathy flows. It takes reality itself to give to sympathy its power. There is no mere theory about it; it must be a living, active, magnetic, searching feeling; or it is nothing.

“And I am sure,” she went on in her remarkably pleasant way, “that now that we have made a single family of it, we shall get on all the better. You can provide what you feel able, you know; and I will supply the rest. We’ll have a common stock of all our goods. Won’t that be a good way for us, Mr. Brindall? You shall attend to business out of doors, and my place shall be in the house here; and you shall see what a famous house-keeper I’ll make. I shall take all the more pains, now I’ve got a new father!”

"You should n't work as hard as you do, dear Fanny," said he, slowly shaking his head. "It wears on you—it wears on you. I see it, if you don't."

"Why, what nonsense that is, father!" She could not help smiling as she spoke the word. "What perfect nonsense! Work too hard? I do no such thing. Here I sit all day and do nothing but sew. Occasionally I stop to take care of my cat, or to tend my two or three flower-pots; and now and then I snatch a half-hour to go out for a little walk through the pleasantest streets; for poor as I feel that I am myself, I do love to see the faces and the dresses of beautiful ladies as they go by, though I know they would n't take any notice of me, or even care whether I was in the world or not. There's many a face that I've grown familiar with already, only from meeting it in the street; and don't you think I can feel that its pleasant smile is for me, if I wish to think so? Why can't I enjoy what I see as well as those for whom such things are only meant?"

This was the gleam of a new philosophy to the fruit-dealer. The pleasant dawn of optimism was streaming over his soul.

"Then I have to go and get my work," she continued, "and carry it back again: that gives me a little fresh exercise, too. So that, put this and that together, I get quite all the variety I need, and I try to be happy. I believe I am happy. Why can't you be, father?"

The memory of the past rushed over him, and his heart seemed pricked cruelly with a thousand thorns. Oh, if he had but the freshness, and innocence, and simplicity of this poor, friendless girl, he thought that nothing in the wide world would be wanting! And he tried to see his way through the gloom that hemmed him in on every side.

CHAPTER XIX.

TO-MORROW.

ELLEN and the girls were on one of their frequent rambles again, scouring the country for its beauties and its pleasures. No summer had seemed half so pleasant before, even to the not altogether satisfied heart of Mary. There was such a sense of freedom and freshness in their daily life; such a wild and unfettered play to their spirits; such a constant geniality in their feelings; so little obstruction to the various plans they formed for their enjoyment; and so much newness and breadth in their very simplest pleasures. Their hearts beat more healthily, and they could not help feeling it.

They called, as usual, at the little cottage of Alice Morrow for a few moments, where they severally took as much interest in the dumb girl as ever: conversing with her by means of her little slate; accepting bunches of simple, domestic flowers at her hands; resting themselves in the retreat of her cozy little parlor; and making her face alive with the deep happiness that welled up from her heart. Ellen betrayed the same emotion she had before shown in the presence of the mute; and Martha noticed and pondered secretly upon it, wondering what it could all mean. And when she took her leave it was by no means in the same manner that the sisters took theirs: she meant much more than she expressed merely by her

smile, and by the tender pressure of her hand. But what it was—it was this that so puzzled and perplexed her friend Martha.

Leaving the house they took the road off the main street, down where the little brook crossed it, and where they stood when Mr. Holliday climbed the wall on his return from his fishing excursion. "Perhaps he will be here again," suggested Mary, laughing; and Martha really "hoped he would." They passed the brook, however, without seeing him. They went forward, and began to climb an ascent up which the narrow road conducted them; and gaining the top, each one immediately expressed a wish to sit down in the shade somewhere till she could get breath again. Martha, as usual, took the business of prospecting upon herself, and looked diligently around for a good broad-branching tree, with flat stones, moss and grass in its shadow. This she was not very long in finding; and calling the others to her, they sat down under the leafy bows of a beautiful rock-maple, and untied their hats, suffering them to hang negligently off their shoulders.

"I like this," said Martha.

"What is that you like so very much?" asked her sister, spreading out her handkerchief over the dark green moss.

"Come, let us know before we begin, lest we some of us are caught admiring the wrong thing." And she followed up her pleasant banter with a laugh, that beneath the wide-spreading tree sounded uncommonly musical.

"Why," said Martha, "every thing; this shade, so cool and grateful after our walk; the landscape, reaching away over the tops of these trees below us, and stretching back—back—back across the far-off meadows, till it melts in the deep blue of the sky. And a thousand other things—why, Mary, you are really getting foolish, you

make so much nonsensical talk about my taste for nature ; just as if you had none of your own !—Don't you think this is pleasant ?" she asked Ellen.

"Yes, indeed," she answered ; "beautiful ; the whole of it beautiful !"

"Just think how much all this wood might bring to its owner," persisted Mary, "if he only had it in town ! What a pretty pile of money he suffers to remain out of doors here all night !"

Ellen and Martha exchanged glances, looked round in Mary's face, and all three broke out in low laughter.

"Mary," said her sister, "how silly you talk ! Do pray try to see something besides profits and losses ! One would think you were about to embark in the wood and coal business, or set up in your name a lumber-yard ! Now here 's a pretty bit of nature—"

"A pretty big bit, you should have said !"

"Yes, a beautiful landscape ; something that is calculated to delight the eyes and feast the soul. Can't you carry a little food to your soul through your eyes for once ?"

"But that little stream yonder," continued Mary, tantalizingly—"don't you think it's a very great waste of water, especially when a good economist might put its shoulder to a wheel, and set a-going a saw-mill and a grist-mill ? You see, Ellen, I have learned all about these horrid coarse names since I have been in the country."

"I'm sure," pleasantly returned Ellen, "I should wish to know them all ; there 's nothing in a new place like this that I should n't be trying all the time to find out."

"You 'd have your hands full then very soon, I can assure you. But if you could do only one half as well in that occupation as the people about you do, your head would be fuller of facts, and a good many things that

are not facts, than any Bodleian library! You never saw people any where that know as much as they do hereabouts. Sometimes, though, they engage in the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties!"

"Hush, Mary," gently reproved her sister. "As long as we live here, don't let's get the ill-will of the people by any hard speeches. If any one is to say hard things let it be somebody else but you or me."

"Say hard things! I can exercise my simple right of criticism, I suppose? You would n't have me—"

"Good afternoon, ladies! I hardly knew who you were, for a time. It's a fine day!"

All sat up straight, elevated their heads, and gazed around them in blank astonishment. Mary broke off exactly in the middle of her speech, and uttered a half-suppressed cry of—"Mercy!"

They saw no one on any one side. They heard no footsteps, listen as intently as they could. The voice—which was plainly that of a man, seemed to come neither from the east or the west—the north or the south. Yet it was a voice, and a human voice; of that there could be no possible doubt. Flesh and blood were certainly related to it, the supernatural construction being quite out of the question.

"Mercy!" again cried Mary, and louder than before; "what's this? What is it?"

"What's what?" asked Ellen.

"What?" echoed Martha.

Hardly had they time to put the brief interrogatory before both joined in the exclamation themselves; and they threw their eyes up altogether to know what was the meaning of this shower of twigs, leaves, bits of bark, and branches.

Six bright eyes directed at the same moment, like a

blazing battery, up into the boughs of a maple-tree! And so sure of their aim, too!

They brought down the game at the very first fire. The figure of a man came lumbering down from bough to bough, some of the smaller ones bending dangerously beneath his weight, and finally dropped with an emphatic bump on the ground at their feet.

"Good afternoon, ladies," saluted he, straightening himself up again and brushing the tangled hair off his forehead. "Guess, I've rather surprised you; could n't well help it, however; trust you'll excuse me for causing you any alarm. As I had the pleasure of remarking above stairs just now—it's quite a fine day!"

Started to their feet with a suddenness they could not have believed possible, the three girls stood confronting Mr. Arthur Holliday.

There was such a curious blending of the modest and the comic in the expression of the young man's countenance that it must have raised a smile whether he would or not. He looked as if he felt sorry for interrupting their quiet pleasure, and yet extremely glad to have fallen in, thus fortunately, with their company.

"I was seated up there in one of my air-castles," said he, "reading and feasting my eyes with the scenery. This tree happens to be one of my few favorites hereabouts; I have several such, and I can see one from the leafy top of another. Now, Miss Mary, shall I not assist you up, by the winding stairway, into the chambers of my castle? Just go up after me, and let me show you what a fine look-out I have from the summit. And the air up there is so fresh and pure! Come; I really think you will like it!"

Mary wished to be excused from an ascent so perilous; but it is hardly safe to assert that if he had extended the

same invitation to her sister Martha—which he seemed to know better than to do—she would not have accepted it on the instant, and gone straight up after him to his eyrie among the lofty maple leaves.

Recovered a little from their affright, and their ordinary humor being quite restored, they started on again in their walk, accepting very gladly the services of the young author as an escort. They turned their steps backward, over the ground they had just traversed, to make their little excursion into the shade, and, at the suggestion of Mr. Holliday, passed along by the road until they reached a cross-path or sort of lane, where he proposed to them to turn in. It would not be a much longer walk for them home by that way, as by describing but a very trifling circuit they could get back on the road again.

They went rambling along down the lane, therefore, talking and laughing, picking such wild flowers and fragrant plants as grew in the shadow of the old stone walls, and making them up into homely and fantastic bouquets, their spirits dancing to the awakening influences and impulses of the time. Even Mary—cynical as she almost invariably wished herself to be considered—especially in matters relating to rural life and enjoyment—unguardedly betrayed the high and healthy tone of her feelings.

Going on, the soft turf yielding so invitingly to the pressure of their feet, they came to a miserable-looking brown house of but a single story. “Who lives here?” was of course the general inquiry.

“This is the residence, I believe,” said Mr. Holliday, “of a gentleman hereabouts known by the name of Jo Rummins; otherwise called in popular phrase—‘Poverty Jo.’ He lives quite alone here, with nothing more than

a lean black dog for a companion. A very interesting character."

Their eyes were directed to the dwelling, as they passed on, long enough to observe that the small low windows were tightly shut; that no light smoke sailed out of the little chimney that pierced the middle of the roof; that dockweed, burdocks, and thistles spread and tangled their coarse leaves in the seven by nine door-yard, and that an old hat or two was wedged in here and there in lieu of panes that might generally be supposed to possess more transparency. These few glimpses gave their quick perceptions an insight into the real character of the solitary, and his easy, slipshod, care-for-nothing, hand-to-mouth sort of a life.

Much further on they reached a pleasanter spot, where stood a neat little structure whose roof was shaded by protecting boughs, and whose lawn was smooth with its green and grassy carpet; the contrast between that and the shell where Poverty Jo slept—for he hardly staid at home more than long enough to sleep—was striking in the extreme.

As they neared the house they observed a woman walking quickly down the lawn from the door, bareheaded, and carrying a white kerchief in her hand. Almost before they had time to question Mr. Holliday of who she was, she had hurried along on the grassy sidewalk to meet them, and came close before their faces.

She glanced round at them all with an indescribable expression of countenance, made up alike of pleasantness and anxiety, and finally settled her eyes on those of Mr. Holliday. Laying her hand on his arm, she asked him in a low and earnest tone—"Has he come yet? Has he come?"

It would be next to impossible to convey to the reader

the effect her manner had upon the feelings of the girls. They would have whispered to one another, stepping back as they did so—"She's crazy!"—but then that attractive mildness in her eye, that sweet smile that had not yet altogether died away about her mouth—these drowned the veriest whispers of their rebellious suspicions, and challenged their sincerest compassion.

"Has he come?" a second time asked the woman, her eyes kindling with a glow of expectation.

"No," answered Mr. Holliday—"no, he has not come yet; but he will come to-morrow."

The girls looked at him in amazement, wondering what he could mean, and not feeling quite sure that he might not be as honest a subject for pity as herself.

"Has n't come!" exclaimed the poor creature, wringing her hands. "But he told me to expect him to-day; he said truly that he would come to-day. Has n't he come, really?"

"He'll be here to-morrow," answered Mr. Holliday a second time, slightly moving along under the compressing hand of his interrogator. "Yes, be patient only till to-morrow."

"Ah! till to-morrow? Will he be here then?" and she gradually relaxed her grasp on his arm again, looking directly up into his face.

A young woman at that instant came running out of the door, and made up to them. Her face bore marks of long-seated anxiety. Her head was uncovered, and her hands were upraised.

"Oh, yes, mother!" called she, eager to lead her away from the strangers; "to-morrow, you know! He'll be here to-morrow! You remember what he told you, that he would come to-morrow? Come, mother; let's go in. We've only got to wait till to-morrow!"

“So we hav’n’t, have we, Nancy? Only one day more, and then he’ll be here! Did you hear that, sir? Did you hear what my daughter said, ladies? I sh’ll see him to-morrow, sure!”

The daughter finally took her poor mother’s arm and led her in again. It was a pitiful sight that of these two beings—the one so entirely dependent on the sympathy of the other. As the little party of ramblers moved on, the girls severally besought their companion to explain to them what the scene meant, for he appeared to know all about it; accordingly, he went through the history from the beginning.

Many years ago this poor woman had a husband, a man to whom she was devotedly attached, and who, for the whole course of his married life, had betrayed an equal fondness for her. Years together they had toiled, early and late, striving to better their condition. Possibly they might have been in some little haste to get rich. Things went on tolerably smooth, however; and the probability is, that they would soon see the accomplishment of all their desires if they did not push them to an unreasonable extent.

But in an evil hour the universal tempter came. Visions of sudden wealth glittered before his eyes. The insane desire to grow rich immediately took possession of his whole being. From that moment all thoughts of contentment, of domestic quiet and happiness, of peaceful occupation at home, fled from his breast. He *would be* rich; and he made so foolish a plea serve as a satisfactory excuse for leaving friends, home, family, and native land, to gather together a mere heap of money. But there are thousands who do yearly just as he did, and his case formed no such exception as to make it deserving of special remark.

One year he staid away—two years—three years. During the lapse of the fourth he signified his intention very soon to return, as he had almost relinquished every hope of attaining his desires. The mirage looked pleasant and real to him at first; but as he thought he was approaching it, he discovered that it still kept itself just as far off. He had more than been paid for his time and his labor, to be sure, but he had not reaped the harvest for which he had put in his sickle.

A letter came to his wife, making her heart and the hearts of her two children glad, by the mention of the day when he expected to sail for home. Then another, dated at the very instant of landing on his native shores in which he appointed the day when he would reach home, and mentioned, with all his old affection, the very hour he expected to look on his wife and children again.

The day came. The stage-coach entered the village, stopped there as usual, and went on. As it passed the foot of a green country lane, starrod with buttercups and daisies, a little family group were to be seen standing just by the corner of the wall, waiting for it to go by. The husband was expected to get out there and be received into the open arms of his family.

The driver drew up. The glad mother's eyes first sought his own, and then went searching through the coach. A gentleman sat there; and the wife involuntarily stepped forward, an exclamation of joy upon her tongue. As suddenly, however, she stepped back again, her face pale as death. The expected one was not there!

It remained with the driver to communicate the sad news, which he did with all the tenderness and consideration of which his good heart was capable. The unfortunate husband had met with an accident on the very wharf on which he landed, by which he lost his life!

And the stage-coach, instead of bringing him home to his eagerly expectant family, brought only the burden of this great and overwhelming grief.

The wife bowed under it, and lost her reason; and each day after, as she saw any one pass, she invariably went to ask if her husband had come; a question that nothing could answer but the sad and ever-repeated words—"To-morrow! to-morrow he will be here!"

CHAPTER XX

POVERTY JO.

MR. NUBBLES walked into Hector Hedge's old tavern one day, and sat down near the door. No one was about, not even the landlord himself; and if his other half happened to see this new customer enter, it is not at all likely that she would pay any further attention to him than simply to satisfy herself that he neither helped himself to such liquors as they kept behind the little wooden bar, nor crowded his hand into so narrow a crack as what they were pleased to style their money-drawer.

He had sat there but a little while when who should enter—and very naturally, too—but Mr. Jo Rummins; and not merely Mr. Rummins himself, but Mr. Rummins's dog.

"Oh, ho!" said Jo, spying Mr. Nubbles, and knocking his soft hat to one side of his head, that he might enjoy a wider field for scratching; "you're here!"

"Yis, yis!" returned Mr. Nubbles, as truly laconic as his friend. "Wonder where the folks be,"—after a pause.

"Don't know," said Jo; "ain't they reound here some'here?" and he stepped across and reached over the bar, as if possible Mr. Hedge might be crammed away underneath.

Just at that moment the landlord walked in at a side door.

"Hullo, there!" said he. "What do you want in under there, Jo?"

Instantly the face of the latter rose like a full moon again, and quite as red from his exertion.

"Lookin' to see if I could find any body," he answered, stuttering, and looking as blank-eyed as the wall itself.

"Wal now, that ain't no sort o' use, Jo Rummins," said the landlord. "Jest you keep t' other side o' my bar, and that's all I've got to say about it!"

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Jo, throwing himself loosely into a flag-bottomed chair; "don't make such a fret about nothin' at all! I hain't stole nothin', an' what's more, I don't mean tew. When you ketch Jo Rummins in that sort o' business you may jest make the most on 't. I give ye full leave."

"Come!" interrupted Mr. Nubbles, rising to his feet; "it's a warm day, Mr. Hedge—a terrible warm day; and I kind o' want a quart o' your very best old Santa Cruz. Got any? eh?"

Mr. Nubbles drew out a little stone jug from the basket he carried in his hand, properly enveloped for secrecy's sake, in a ragged piece of an old tow-cloth bag, and held it up before the landlord's face just as a soldier would present arms.

"Fact! I don't know's I have got any," said Mr. Hedge, bustling round behind the bar; "but I'll look an' see!"

So he did look and see. Yes, he had Santa Cruz enough, and enough of all the other sorts besides. He only made this pretense of doubt because it was his universal custom. It had grown to be a professional habit with him.

While the strong-scented liquid was gurgling down the throat of Mr. Hedge's tin funnel into the neck of

Mr. Nubbles's stone jug, Jo Rummins sat and watched the process longingly. His lips seemed to be never any drier. He wet them with his tongue, and made a half-smacking noise with them, as if he only wished the stone throat of the jug was his throat.

"Hold on!" cried Mr. Nubbles, who had stood over and watched the operation thus far. "Le's have what's in there to drink! Have suthin', Jo?"

Jo stepped up with alacrity, of course. Mr. Hedge furnished a couple of tumblers, and the worthy pair—worthy certainly of each other—drank down a fiery draught apiece "to a better understandin'," as if there might, at some dim and indistinct time in the past, have existed a *mis*-understanding between them.

They did not favor Hector Hedge long with their society, after this exploit, but started off for home. Jo had got a taste, and all the several elements of his soul instantly resolved themselves into a committee of the whole, on the best method of getting a look at the inside bottom of the jug. Mr. Nubbles was going to get his horse, that stood hitched but a little way off, and then proposed going directly over to Worrywitch Hill. "I'll take ye as fur 's I go," said he to Jo, "an' welcome."

That was enough. Jo got in, and his dog trotted along after.

Coming to the turn where Rummins should properly have left his companion, each found himself in a highly agreeable state of feeling, with his conversational powers elevated quite a little distance above their ordinary pitch. Jo proposed to his friend to turn in and ride over to his house before going home. The old horse stopped short, while Mr. Nubbles deliberated on it, looking down at the ground.

"Oh, come," plead Jo, giving him a sudden nudge

with his elbow; "you can't do no better, if you go home. Come! let's set down, and kind o' have a good old-fashioned chat. We ha'n't had sich a one this long time. Come along, Nubbles! What's the use't."

There was n't any "use't," and Mr. Nubbles turned in his patient beast, the dog now taking the liberty of trotting before.

Arrived at the little lonely solitude of Jo, Mr. Nubbles carefully hitched his horse, as was his wont, and both went in through thistles, burdocks, and coarse dockweeds to the door. Jo fumbled round among the crevices at the underpinning for the key, which he duly fished up and applied to the lock. As the door swung open, and they entered the house, a dry, musty, repulsive smell saluted their olfactories, which, but for the ample protection so recently afforded their stomachs, might have caused a sensation in those organs not much unlike nausea. The ceiling was very low, and needed whitewash badly. The walls were without paper, and some of them without even plaster. Each window was secured by a stick, no one of which did Jo ever suffer to be opened, let him have as many friends call as his little domicile could hold.

There were but two rooms that were really inhabitable, one of which appeared to serve for a sitting and sleeping room, and the other in the capacity of a kitchen, wash-room, cellar, and so forth. Jo esteemed himself a respectable housekeeper, whether people called him tidy or not; that was nothing to him, so long as he only suited himself. He could cook; he could wash; and he could do very well, so far as he was a judge, every thing that he wanted done. What more was really worthy of his consideration?

"Set down, Nubbles," said he, kicking at a chair for

him. "You've been here afore, I s'pose? So jest try to make yourself to home!"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Nubbles, with a slight lisp, "I've been here afore; I guess I have—he! he! But hold on a minnit; le' me go out and git that basket! You know?" and he winked his eye at Jo, as he thought, with a great deal of cunning.

"Yis, yis," chimed in the perfectly satisfied solitary; "go ahead! I'll fetch some water an' some tumblers!"

A very brief interval of time was abundantly sufficient to enable them to conclude all the necessary preliminaries; and forthwith they found themselves seated before a little pine table, with a pitcher and two dirty tumblers right under their noses.

"A-a-h! that's good!" cried Jo, after making the first attempt at the jug, and striking his tumbler down on the table with an emphasis for which no glass manufacturer would be foolish enough to give a warrant. "That's the raal old stuff! the reg'lar thing, Nubbles! Have a pipe?" continued he, reaching out for one on the low mantel. Mr. Nubbles did n't smoke, whatever else he did. So Poverty Jo sat and whiffed away all by himself.

And while he is whiffing, let me take the liberty to just touch him off with a hasty description.

There he sat, hat, pipe, shoes, and all. He had managed to pile up his two feet on the table, with the pitcher of water and other things, where they were displayed to the best advantage possible. His hat he had stuck tight on the exact crown of his head, and his hands into the edges of his trowsers' pockets. Look out for a long, frowsy beard, a mouth stained at the corners with tobacco juice, a pair of eyes that seemed to be going asleep all the time, and face and forehead covered thickly over with little fine wrinkles, like plaits on a shirt frill;

and, after you have put the short stump of a pipe in his mouth, you had the outline picture of Jo Rummins. He wore no coat, nothing but a woolen vest that hung flabbily from his shoulders, and a pair of faded blue trowsers; and his bare ankles hardly did those perceptible strips of his body any great credit, as they offered themselves in contrast with even his rough and dusty shoes.

He who said that Jo was a bad man, betrayed his perfect ignorance of the subject he talked about. Better men there unquestionably were, for even Jo himself said he made no sort of pretension or profession; but worse men, regarded especially in the matter of citizenship, and quiet, uniform deportment, it would be easy to find in almost any place that thought itself worth a name. Jo said of himself: "I jest mean to go 'long an' mind my own business peaceably; don't calc'late to hurt nor molest no livin' creetur; don't mean to keep lookin' behind me on my way home, for fear somebody's arter me to ask what I've been stealin'; mind my own business, and let other folks mind theirs." That was about a fair compilation of his creed, and it is due to him to add that he was a very consistent follower of the very few principles therein set forth.

Poverty Jo—as one would readily conclude from his popular name—was not a rich man; neither would it be exactly fair to say that he was a downright poor man; that is, as things went around him. He owned this little house such as it was; and the fruits of its burdocks and thistles in front, and of its few hills of corn and potatoes in the rear, were all indisputably his own. So that he was not really in want, nor yet was he quite above it; but rather, as somebody has very graphically defined the position of such an individual, he occupied that vague and dim borderland, that formed a sort of boundary line be-

tween respectability and the poor-house. Jo knew every body, and every body knew Jo. If he had n't a friend in the world, he could say with just as much truth that he had n't an enemy. He was a hanger-on upon the skirts of rustic civilization; quite as much a companion for the squirrels and woodchucks, and other creatures that found apartments under ground, as for those who made it a point to associate together and attend church each week in the village, above ground.

"You 've got a likely sort of a dog there, Jo," offered Mr. Nubbles. "What 'll ye take for him, say?"

Jo drew the pipe from his mouth, slowly turned his head about so that he could get a look at the creature, and fell into a train of deliberation. The old dog's history spread itself out right before his eyes like a high-colored map.

"What 'll I take for him?" repeated he, every word very slowly; "do ye think I'd sell that dog, Nubbles? Do ye s'pose any man 's rich enough to buy him of me?"

Endowed with perceptions such as not every dog could boast, this dog raised his head from his outstretched fore paws, winked at his master first with one eye and then with the other, threw a glance up at Mr. Nubbles, gaped widely, and laid his head down again.

"See that, now?" said Jo. "He knows what we're talkin' about!"

"Sho! Do you really think so? Wal, he 's a knowin' dog if he does. Worth so much the more, I s'pose—eh? But what 'll ye take for him any way?"

"Take for him! I won't sell him, I tell you! Do you think I'd part with the best friend I've got in the world? and jest for a little money? No; I hopes I've got a soul a leetle above that, if folks ain't a mind to think I've got a soul for any thing more. You can't buy

that dog, Nubbles; no, nor no other man! Come; what say to another—an-oth-er shake-up o' your jug there?"

It would n't be veritable history to say that some instinctive delicacy made Mr. Nubbles shrink from the operation denominated by Jo as "another shake-up of the jug," for that worthy did take hold on the stone vessel, and did take out the stopper; and the motions that were indulged in immediately after, by both individuals, had much better be left to the suspicions of the reader than intrusted to description. It is enough to add that just as soon as the rightful proprietor of the jug could get an opportunity to do so, he crowded the stopper into the neck again with a rather unsteady hand, jammed the jug itself into the basket, hung the basket over his arm, and appeared to set every thing and every body silently at defiance. Jo saw how things stood, and inwardly fell to bewailing the unpromising nature of the circumstances that shadowed him. All he did, however, was to knock his hat a little further back on his head, rub briskly the new exposure, pull his pipe out of his mouth, and put it back again.

"Nubbles," said he, biting his pipe-stem in order to talk, "this is a queer world!"

"Queer enough," acquiesced the other, shaking his head, and clapping his hand to his basket as if not yet quite satisfied of its safety.

"Folks don't pull together as they 'd orter; if they did, every body 'd handle more money 'n they dew, an' git more clo's to wear, and hev a little more to eat an' drink, an' all that sort o' thing. Beats all, how the world goes. I git sick on 't sometimes; no friends—no kind of a home—not much work, and a good deal less pay—same old road to travel from one year's end to t' other's—no

change—no nothin', but my old dog here! I git 'most discouraged sometimes, Nubbles!"

The dog again looked up in his master's face, as if he did not quite comprehend his meaning.

"Why, what on airth's the matter!" exclaimed Mr. Nubbles, his eyes opening with astonishment. "Why, Jo; you're gittin' bleu! Jes' look o' me, now," and he held out both hands at arm's length that he might the better look at him. "Jes' see how I'm sitooated, now! A man with a wife, and such a wife; and you've got no such a thing! My boy I like well enough, and he's a great comfort, to be sure; but then, jes' look at what I have to go through to enjoy that boy! Jo Rummins, le' me tell you one thing, and do you hear me; if you should live a thousan' year don't ye never git married! It's my advice, an' it's my experience, too. Jes' let the female sex go! They ain't what I thought they was, once! I've got deceived Jo Rummins; an' when man's got deceived, he's pooty shure not to want his friends to ketch the disease! So do you jest remember what I say!"

And the recollection of his wife flashed so vividly over his mind, blazing through his obfuscations as brightly as the sun shines through a white fog, that he started to his feet as if the peal of a trumpet rang in his ears, and said, "He thought he must be goin'."

Jo sat and ruminated further over the subject, and over the subject of life in general; and his thoughts grew more and more despondent, and his heart, like a truthful barometer, sank lower and lower, till it is doubtful if he could ever have climbed up out of that well of darkness again had not sleep suddenly snatched away his consciousness, and changed all the heights and depths of the realities into the smooth level of a pleasant dream.

CHAPTER XXI.

A BACK-DOOR VISITOR.

ELLEN had gone back to town. The sisters were sad enough, and sat talking soberly about it.

"If we could but have her here all the time," said Mary, trying to disentangle a skein of light silk, "I could seem to endure it! How much we shall miss her, Martha, now she is gone!"

"But we can return her visit," suggested Martha, catching at the slightest hope of raising their spirits.

"So we can; so we can; and that's what I'll get ready to do this very winter; and we'll both go and make a regular season of it, won't we?"

"And leave father and mother here alone?" asked the thoughtful Martha.

Mary paused. That consideration had slipped her mind entirely.

"They would be perfectly willing, I am sure," said she.

"That may be; but then, I try to ask myself sometimes if doing so would be doing perfectly right. Isn't it rather like deserting them? How do we know that they are not apt to be lonely as well as ourselves?"

"You are always so self-sacrificing, Martha! I declare, I sometimes wish I was more like you. Every body seems to think more of you than they do of me. And now I believe I see the reason why."

Martha could be made to believe no such thing, whether it was so or not. She was unwilling to claim for herself, even secretly, any superiority over one she loved as dearly as her sister; and that very spirit of self-abnegation brought out her beautiful qualities only the more prominently.

"But Ellen was very urgent," plead Mary. "I don't see how we're to avoid going very well. And I know that father will be perfectly willing and anxious that we should, too; especially when he comes to know how much she depends upon it."

Martha might have helped on the discussion of the subject still further; but a voice they both were able to recognize fell on their ear, and through the door that led out into the kitchen appeared Mr. Dandelly.

"Well done!" said he, lifting up both hands.

Mary screamed outright with laughter. This time she was determined to try another application.

Martha only bowed, while her face combined on its surface a great variety of expressions.

He was newly dressed this time, and a little more gayly than usual. White, however, was rather the predominating color about him. His hair seemed newly curled, his mustache seemed newly furbished. His white beaver had been brushed down till it was sleek as a mole's back, and still he kept rubbing it with the palm of his hand.

They did not ask him to sit down; but that was to his mind no sort of reason why he should not sit down. He slid into a seat, and began his comments and questions.

"Very fine young lady, that Miss Worthington. She's gone home, I've heard."

Both the girls happened to feel in just the mood to humor him: so they told him she had.

"I only wish I'd ha' known it before," said he. "I de-

clare, I believe I sh'd been 'most tempted to go along with her, take care of her baggage and things. Strange I never hear of nothin', till it 's all over with !"

"Are you really one of that unfortunate class of mortals?" inquired Mary.

Mr. Dandelly acknowledged, with shame and confusion of face, that he believed he was. "However," added he, with a strong emphasis on that word, "I don't know but I'm lucky sometimes. There is such things, Miss Rivers, even to the unfortunate ones."

A second time he thought it necessary for him to state that he thought Miss Worthington, who he was sorry to hear had just gone, was "a very fine girl;" and he added that he should like to get better acquainted with her. "But I go to the city, once in a while, and I can call on her; that is, if I can only find out from you what street and number she lives in."

Neither of the girls spoke. Their odd visitor scrutinized their faces with his twinkling little eyes, put his hat down on the floor beside his chair, and passed his hand cautiously over the bed of curls on his head, to see if all things above were in perfect order.

"Now let me hold that skein of silk for you, Miss Rivers," said he, desirous of making himself useful.

"Oh no, sir," she replied. "I would n't trouble you as much as that. Pray keep your seat, Mr. Dandelly. I can get along with it myself just as well." And in her sudden confusion, she got along so well with it, that she threw it into more snarls than she had extricated it from in the last ten minutes.

"I could help you now, I know, if you 'd but let me," persisted he. "Ah! what new book have you got there on the table? I guess I did not see that, the last time I was here, did I?"

He got up and took the book from the little stand. "Marrymust Bridge: A Romance," said he, repeating the words he read on the back. "Quite a pretty book. Proper, han'some binding. Beaut'ful letters on the back, all gilt so. What sort of a book is it?"

Mary told him she thought it was quite a handsome book, catching at his own idea.

"So 'tis; I declare, 'tis so," said he, not discerning the satire in her expression at all. "Give me a handsome book, even if the readin' ain't quite so good!" And totally indifferent to the character of the trifling part he called the "readin'," he began a flirting motion to and fro with the leaves, looking critically at the top and bottom edges.

"I like to see gilt on the leaves, don't you?" said he. "Now how much purtier, how much richer so handsome a book as this is, would look with gilt edges! What a pity folks don't always stop to think, before they go and sp'ile a thing! However, I don't say that's sp'iled, by no means."

"Oh, no," joined in Mary, archly, "I think that will keep a long time yet."

He did n't understand it. Whenever any thing that was said puzzled him, he had a habit of staring blankly for a moment at the person who had done the mischief, and then of feeling his head, as if something might be suddenly wrong there.

"From Mr. Holliday, eh?" he returned, after reading the inscription in pencil on the fly leaf.

"Yes, from Mr. Holliday," promptly and decisively answered Martha.

"I could have told you that," said her sister, "without giving you the trouble to look."

"Are you very much acquainted with him?" he asked.

"Did you ever see him, or know him, or hear of him, before you came here?"

"Yes, we feel a little acquainted with him," answered Mary. "Why do you inquire?"

"Oh, nothing. Only I'd seen him walkin' out round with you a good deal, and I'd heerd he was gettin' to be something of a visitor out here, besides. I s'pose you like him, of course?—he! he! he!—else he would n't come out here!—he! he!"

"What do you think of him, Mr. Dandelly?" asked Mary, quizzingly, and glancing hastily at her sister.

"Well, now," said he, dropping his voice a little, "I really sh'd like to tell you, for I know 't you don't know about him quite so well as I do."

"Yes," acquiesced Mary, leading him blindly on.

He drew up his chair a trifle, as if he were inclined to be somewhat confidential.

"The fact is, now," said he, "I don't want exactly to say any thing against a person behind their backs, though of course, folks must now and then expect that something will be said about them."

The girls appeared to assent to the principle contained in the last clause, perfectly.

"I've known him longer than you have, both of you," he went on. "He's a clever fellow enough, I've always thought, and real good hearted; that is, for all I know to the contrary."

"Yes," acquiescingly responded Mary, again.

"They say, too, he's a fellow of some talents; but I don't know so much about that, and so I can't undertake to say."

"Perhaps," said Mary, "you may not consider yourself a good judge!"

He paused to stare at her a moment, his hand went,

like the movement of an automaton, directly to the top of his head, and then he recovered himself again.

"He writes a good déal, I s'pose; but what it all amounts to, that I can't tell. I never see much of it yet. Fact is, I don't think much of those sort of things."

"Yes," again put in Mary, in a tone that to his ears sounded remarkably sweet and alluring.

"Folks say that he's this, and he's that; but that don't seem to amount to much, after all. What a man does, is what you know him by; and that's the whole of't. Now what is a piece of scribblin'? Why, any body can set down and scratch off a story, or any thing o' that sort, on clean foolscap—that is, if he's got the time and ain't too lazy, as I am myself. I don't see why people choose to make such a great fuss over a person that can just write a little; as if one could n't do it about as well as another. Books are all well enough; I like a good book, if it's got a nice sort of a story to it, or any thing like that; because it helps you so much in gettin' rid of a dull spell, like an hour before dinner, or a real rainy afternoon; but these common sort o' writin's, such as some of his are, perhaps—why, what does any body care about them?"

"I see you have a great deal of discrimination!" said Mary.

"Well, I don't know about that," he answered. "Fact is, I don't have time to read very much, any way. I'm here, and there, and every where, all the while; traveling about from one part of the country to another; and so many acquaintances to visit, too! I tell you, books are a thing that's pretty much out o' the question with me."

Mary was persevering with her quiet fun. "Have you ever called on Mr. Holliday many times?" said she.

"Called? Oh, la, yes! called once, and talked with

him over the palin' while he was to work in the garding; called agin, and he jest spoke a few words to me, and said finally he would like to be excused—he was so busy jest then! I thought he was a good deal of a gentlêman that time, I did! Fact was, I did n't like him one bit. And people all about here tell me that he won't have nothin' to do with nobody at all; he's proud, an' distant, an' don't speak half the time; and I guess myself that he's got no very great reason to stick himself up so above common folks."

"But perhaps he does n't," suggested Martha, speaking for the second time during this odd conversation. "Perhaps people would think differently if they only knew him."

"Well, then, why don't he take a little more pains to get acquainted with folks? Why ain't he willin' they should get acquainted with him? What makes him carry himself so stiff, and hold his head so high, and try to look down on every body that comes near him?"

"Do you think he does?" she asked.

"Does n't every body think he does, I should like to know?"

"But perhaps this is nothing but a mistake of their own. How do they know, without first finding out, that his tastes are their tastes? People can't expect one to lay his whole heart open to them unless there is some very manifest reason for it; and if his sympathies and their sympathies happen to kindle when they come in contact, they will get thoroughly acquainted before they once think of it."

"Well, I don't see myself, I don't, why he should pretend to feel that his tastes are any better than any body's else tastes; he's nothing different from common folks;

he walks pretty much as other men do, and wears his hat pretty much as they do—as I do myself.”

“That is something in his favor, I’m sure,” said Mary. “’Tis n’t every body that does that!”

“Well,” said he, a little uneasily, “I don’t know what you think of him; but I don’t think much of him. I can’t get acquainted with him; and when I find a man like that, I begin to consider that he ain’t much of a man; leastways, not much of a one for me. If a person is any thing extra let him show it out; not go hiding about in the bushes, as he does, and make a great pretension that he ain’t to be come at by common folks! That’s my doctrine, exactly.”

“Perhaps you know who the author of that book is that you hold in your hand?” said Mary.

He looked once more at the lettering on the back; he turned it over, and looked carefully at the edges; and then he fell to flirting the leaves carelessly to and fro again. “No, I don’t,” said he. “Do you?”

“Oh, yes; we know.”

“Who is it? Some city friend of yours? I declare I should like to get acquainted with him. Perhaps he’s coming out here before summer’s over; and I shall most likely be gone to the Springs!”

“Perhaps,” said Mary, “you can see him even if you do go to the Springs. I guess that will not interfere.”

“Why? Who is he? Will he be there when I am? What is his name?”

“You have seen him already, I think. His name is Mr. Holliday; and he is a particular friend of ours, as perhaps you did n’t till this moment know!”

Martha had to laugh outright. She could not keep her mirth bottled up any longer.

The evident embarrassment, if not consternation, into

which their visitor was thrown, seemed sufficient punishment for the impudent indiscretions of which he was guilty.

He stared, first at Mary, and then at Martha; then up went his hand again to the crown of his ringleted head; and finally he fell to looking over the book itself, as if he might as well examine into the merits of the work before he had any thing further to offer about the author.

CHAPTER XXII.

LITTLE PILGRIMS.

To go back to Gabriel again. During the term of his life with Crankey and his associates, he found that one day varied not much from another. In the dearth and the dimness of new prospects that they held out to him, they were altogether alike. He ran on errands for Crankey and for Kate. When not otherwise employed, he was suffered to run about in the alleys and lanes that beset his obscure abode, and pick up such a fund of enjoyment as might best suit his youthful inclination. He liked this little enough, it is true; he grew sick at heart from seeing the shameless and repulsive sights that daily greeted him; but still, almost any thing was preferable to being hived up in the hot upper room where his protector lodged, sometimes with the shutters up and the stout bars behind them.

“You may jest feel of what gentleman’s coat pockets you fall in with,” said Isaac to him one day, as he sent him out for air and exercise. “But mind how you do it. Don’t go to pullin’ and twitchin’ things about in this way”—explaining to him the style he meant—“for that never’ll do; but jest let yer hand go over loosely—it’s a little hand, and I know you can do it—and if you find a nose-wiper, ’specially if it happens to be a silk one, why, you know what then? Be sharp now, boy!”

"What?" asked Gabriel, in all innocence.

"What! you little—you—you—are you so thick you can't take?" said he, angrily, while his eyes blazed fiercely upon him for a few minutes. "If there's a han'-kercher, take it, of course! What else do you suppose I want you to do? And after you've got to be a little skillful at that, why, there's a front pocket, where some men carry their purses! Do you take now?—hey?"

"You don't want me to steal, do you, Mr. Crankey?" asked the boy, meeting the man's wicked eye with one of his own sorrowful looks.

"Steal! Don't ye dare to speak that word! Don't never let me hear you say it again! Steal! No; I want you to be industrious, and earn your own livin'—work your own way along. If you see a good chance to draw a silk han'kercher out of a fool's pocket, you've got a right to it; and he's only the bigger fool for lettin' it go! So now off with you; and don't come home agin unless you fetch somethin' along with ye! D' ye hear?"

Gabriel moved out of the room, crying and sobbing bitterly.

"It is n't for this that I brought ye here, youngster," added Crankey. "You've got to get yer livin' one way or another, and you might as well begin now as a year hence. Stop that blubberin' now, or I'll shut ye up where you'll blubber all day! Put on a pleasant face, and go to work and see how much you can bring home to me!"

"I can not take any thing that don't belong to me," said Gabriel, in a tone almost of despair. "My mother told me never to do such wrong things as that. She told me to be good always!"

"Your mother? And who was your mother, you little minx? What sort of a creetur was she anyhow?"

Did n't you tell me that you come from a poor-house? and do you s'pose that what a poor-house woman says amounts to any thing? Do you s'pose it's goin' to have any thing to do with me? or with any boy 't I take to bring up? Come; away with you! Don't have no more o' this whinin' and cryin'; that's only for babies; turn right about an' be a man, an' forget that you ever come from such a place as an old country poor-house! Do your best now, to-day, and you'll find that I shall pay you well for 't."

Gabriel went out, and wended his way to a well-known retreat in a neighboring alley, where the sun never came and footsteps were rarely heard during the day; and sitting down upon a damp stone, he buried his face in his hands, and wept for the memory of his mother. His breast heaved; the tears rolled through his fingers and dropped on the hard pavement; his lips fashioned expressions of sorrow, that not even one dear, good friend was left to him; and he appeared utterly broken with his grief.

When, after the expiration of a long time, he aroused himself and came out upon the alley again, his eyes were much swollen, and he felt dizzy and faint. What to do, or where to go, was a problem for his thoughts. He knew no other living friend but Isaac, and he dared not go back to him yet. He could think of no one but his mother. Yes, yes, through the clouds looked the sympathizing countenances of Mrs. Joy and of old Nathan Grubb; and they encouraged him. But he thought of them as being themselves as friendless and as poor as he, and his gleam of encouragement grew dim. And yet one other face—a sweet face, a kind and gentle face, so radiant and so heavenly in its expression, that he yearned in his heart for the deep pleasure of looking on it but

even once again—beamed brightly upon him, and a thrill of joy darted through his heart, that quite revived him. It was the face of Martha Rivers; as it appeared to him when she followed him to the gate, and offered him that little bunch of garden flowers which Mrs. Nubbles was thoughtful enough to throw into the fire on his return home. Oh, if he could see Martha at this moment, and tell her all his many, many troubles! It seemed as if he would be happy then.

While he walked thus thoughtfully along, he overtook little Jane, who was herself roaming about in the purlieus of the place. Their eyes met, as he spoke to her. She betrayed all her former interest in Gabriel, and seemed to regard him with a feeling like affection. At once, therefore, they fell into conversation, walking on while they talked.

They chatted of what they saw, both objects and persons; and of the people among whom their lot was thrown; and at last Gabriel's thoughts took a wide turn, and he asked her if she had ever lived in the country.

"No," answered little Jane. "Where's that? I never seed that place yet!" and her blue eyes were fixed on Gabriel's. "What kind of a place is it? Is it like this here?"

"Like this? Oh, no; nothing at all," he explained. "It's a beautiful place, where the trees grow up as thick as you ever saw; and the grass is just as green as can be; and the brooks run all the year! There ain't any brooks here, nor any grass, and only a few trees that I could count in a minute, and they are away off in the park; there's no trees here. But all the country's beautiful! I'd like to go back there again," he added musingly.

"Why don't you?" asked the girl. "I should think you'd love to stay there all the time."

"Because Isaac would n't go with me," said he. "Who would take care of me, if I should go away from him? Who would show me the way back, either?"

"Where is your mother, Gabriel?"

A tear swam about in his eye.

"I hav'n't got any mother," said he, his lip trembling with the sudden memory of her all-protecting love.

"She died."

Little Jane was silent a moment.

"Where did she die?" she asked.

"We lived in a poor-house, they called it; but 't was a great deal better place than where I live now, though I would n't dare to tell Isaac so, for all the world! But I loved the green spots round there so much; and in the summer time you see I could stay out doors 'most all the while, and bring home as many flowers as I wanted to mother; and she always looked so pleasant, and smiled on me, when I brought them to her and laid them in her lap! Oh, if only those days would come back again—if 't was in the poor-house!"

"Did she die there?" pursued his companion, her sympathies enlisted deeply in his story.

"Yes," said Gabriel, with an unaffected sigh.

"How long ago was it? Was it a good many years? Do you remember all about it now?"

"It was only last winter," answered he; "only a little while ago. She has n't been dead but so long."

"But hav'n't you got a father, neither?"

"I don't know." He had a mysterious look on his countenance, as he answered her. "I never saw him."

Again the girl was silent with her thoughts. "Do you think I would like to live in the country?" she afterward inquired, changing the subject somewhat, as she saw it troubled him.

"Yes, indeed," he promptly answered; "yes, indeed. I only wish you could go there with me."

"Where would you go? Back to the poor-house again? Would they take you back there, do you s'pose?"

"Oh, no; I should n't want to go there; no, indeed; and I should n't like at all to live with Mr. Nubbles again; but I should be glad enough to go to such a pleasant spot as Draggledew Plain, and live with somebody like beautiful Miss Rivers, out on the side hill there above the village. I would n't want to stay where Kit Nubbles nor his mother could see me."

Little Jane asked him how that was; and he went about explaining it all patiently to her—his being bound out to live with Mr. Nubbles's folks—his sufferings while he remained in that very strange family—his accidental acquaintance with Martha, who would always appear before his eyes as almost an angel of light—and his final escape under the peculiar circumstances that favored him.

To his whole narration the girl listened with deep attention, and apparent sympathy. Her heart bled for his wrongs, and innocently went out to him with its silent offers of childlike assistance.

"Could n't we go any where into the country but to Draggledew Plain?" asked she. "Is n't there another spot in the country as pleasant as that?"

"Yes, plenty of 'em. I came through a good many when I run away from there. Many a time I thought I'd rather stop where I was, than to go on."

"And Isaac came all the way with you, did he?"

"Every step of it. I kept close to him for I had n't got another friend in the world then."

"But do you like Isaac any better than you did those cruel folks out there?"

"He don't beat me so much as they did. I did n't

like that very much, and when I did n't know what 't was for."

"Did they beat you much out there?" said she, regarding him with eyes of melting tenderness and affection.

"Yes, indeed; all of 'em did. First it was Mis' Nubbles, and then Mr. Nubbles, and then Kit; all beat me as if they liked to, and did n't know what else to do. I could n't live there—I should have died after a while. I wanted to run away before I did. I'm glad enough that I got so far away from 'em all, and I'm gladder yet that I know you, Jane; but I like to live out in the country a great deal better than this. It's so grand out there; and so beautiful. Oh, I feel so homesick sometimes—if I did live in a poor-house!"

"But don't Isaac take care of you here?"

"Isaac? He wants me,"—here he lowered his voice, and took hold of her shoulder to detain her while he told the shameful story,—“don't you think that Isaac wants me to steal!—to steal! Did you ever hear the like of that?"

She was silent again, and a deep shade of sadness stole over her face.

"Out there," he resumed, "I can go just where I want to; and there's no danger of getting lost, or being run over, and good many other things I could tell you about. Oh, I wish Isaac would leave this and go into the country, and live like a good man! I would be so glad to work for him, and do every thing I could; but I can't steal, Jane; I can't do that!"

"Isaac could n't live there," said she, as astute in her instincts as those far older than herself.

"Why not? Why could n't he?" demanded Gabriel.

"Oh, because," said she; "he don't love to be by

himself so much ; and you say you have to be alone out there a good deal."

"Yes ; and I like that so much the more."

"And that's why Isaac would n't. No, I don't believe he'd ever go there ; no, nor Mis' Sharkie, either. If she only would, now !"

"Do you like Mis' Sharkie ?" asked Gabriel.

She hesitated a moment, and then answered that she did n't like to tell.

"Does she beat you then ?" pursued he.

"Sometimes she does ; when she—when she—when—but she don't know any thing about it, though. She is n't so much to blame for it, you see."

"No, I don't see !" he replied, impressively. "If she beats you, she's awful ! and that's what I think of her ! I wish I could do as I want to. I wish I was a man, Jane !"

"What for, Gabriel ?"

"Because—then I should n't let Mis' Sharkie whip you ; nor any body else either ! I'd take care of you, Jane ! That's why I wish I was a man, Jane !"

The girl felt manifestly grateful for this evidence of his regard, and was none too young, either, to understand to the last syllable what it meant. She cast her eyes up to the face of Gabriel, and with a silent look alone thanked him. That look was eloquence itself.

Reaching a corner, they heard a voice.

"Hello, my son !"

They looked round, and there stood Billy Bottes.

"And little Jane, too !" he exclaimed, raising his voice.

"Where've ye both been ? What've ye been a doin' of ?"

They explained to him that they were engaged about nothing but the pursuit of their own innocent pleasures, strolling wheresoever the fancy took them.

"Then let me show ye how to save yer time," said

Billy. "You know 't they say 't time 's money ; an' if 'tis, then you 'll stan' a chance to lay up somethin' ! Come along a little with me !"

They exchanged looks of inquiry with one another, and then followed silently on. The way led back through the alley up which he had just come, and finally took them into a labyrinth of alleys and lanes, and passages, and courts, and dark doorways, that would have been enough to confuse beyond recovery any head less at home in such localities than that of Billy himself ; but through every one of which he piloted them with a dexterity worthy the attainments of a secret agent of the police.

"Jest come down here !" said he, pointing down a dark stairway, from which arose savors strong enough to breed a pestilence.

Little Jane looked at Gabriel as if she would ask—"Is it best to go ?"

"Come along !" again called Billy, leading the way down himself.

They kept on after him. In a few steps they arrived on the floor of a low cellar, over which were confusedly strewn rags, filth, straw, broken pieces of old chairs and of a table, and a few torn articles of cast-away clothing.

A dull light was just burning in the further side of the apartment, to which he silently directed their attention. They all three approached it. The sight that there offered itself, accustomed as they more or less were to the scenes of misery and wretchedness around them, struck horror even to their hearts. They shrank back aghast and fearful.

Lying there upon a pile of mere filth and uncleanness, was the body of a negro-woman with an infant resting across her outstretched arm. Both were dead ; and the

face of the woman upturned to the wall, with its eyes and mouth partially closed, sent a chill to their feelings from which they could scarcely recover.

"Darkies!" exclaimed the little wretch, pointing to them with a laugh.

"Oh! let's go! let's go!" said little Jane, shudderingly. "I want to breathe fresh air again! Come Gabriel!"—and they turned abruptly and went out by the same way they came, their wicked little guide following after, and filling their ears with the repulsive accounts he had collected respecting the scene they had witnessed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHOWDER AND CHARITY.

A FEW days after, having already been furnished by Isaac with forty-eight hours' imprisonment for failing to obey his directions in the matter of pocket-picking, Gabriel was out again, sauntering up and down the streets alone. He felt more sorrowful than ever, for he saw that his way was even a more cheerless one than that which he was traveling under the eyes of Mr. Nubbles. Nothing seemed attractive. Nothing looked hopeful. The people who passed him, were a hard-faced, cold-hearted set of people, caring nothing in the world whether he was alive or dead.

He at length came to a narrow street in the neighborhood of the wharves, through which a throng seemed to be moving. It was now one o'clock. All the city clocks had successively struck the hour; and now a single bell, perched in a lofty belfry, was swinging, and tumbling, and turning famous somersets, telling the weary laborers of the town that their dinner hour was at hand. The ringing of this bell was one of the old-time customs that were still suffered to remain.

In this street where Gabriel was idly wandering, no vehicles but carts and drays, and heavy trucks ever threaded their way; and just now the vehicles were all quiet, and their drivers, smutty and heated, were elbowing their way along to dinner.

One man, with an open and benevolent face, belonging to a troop that were hurrying along, turned around to see what so frail a child as Gabriel could be doing there, jostled and knocked about as he was by the crowd, and asked him kindly where he was going.

"Nowhere," answered the boy.

"Nowhere, is it?" said he; "then, by George, you sh'll go up to dinner with me; for it's a mighty few sharks I've seen in my short day, 't ever looked a half as much starved as you do! Come, my little lad," he reached down and took him by the hand, "jest go up them stairs with me, an' you shall have all you can eat, for once! Come!"

His manner was so persuasive, and Gabriel, by much compelled abstinence during his imprisonment, was so famished, that he yielded almost without a syllable, suffering the stranger to carry him along with him. The man was dressed like a sailor, and soon joined his associates again.

The dining-room was just at the head of a flight of very dark and narrow stairs, and was familiarly known to all who were in the daily habit of frequenting it, by the euphonious name of the "Bread Basket." Thither tended this crowd, hungry for dinner.

They came up to the meal of the day in squads and squadrons; men all sunburnt, hirsute, and swarthy. Some hastily flung away their quids, preparing themselves more perfectly for the approaching exercise in gastronomy. Some threw their short-jackets over their shoulders, and tried to prig themselves up a little, where they fancied they needed it. Others were chattering with one another of the work of the day, of their wages, their prospects, and the weather.

It was a very pleasant pseudonyme—The Bread Basket

—for a sailor's boarding-house; and these men seemed, as they pointedly expressed it, "to glory as much in the name, as the vittles." Could an observer but have taken his stand at the door of the long dining-room, where he might see these strong men crowding up the stairs and afterward filing off around the table, his feelings would have been inexpressibly regaled with the picture.

Cod, haddock, and halibut were smoking on the board, emitting appetizing fumes and savors in such plenty as soon filled the whole apartment. Exactly in the middle of the table, long as it was, was set a huge leviathan vessel, in which chunks of white cod, with plump bits of bread, and highly savory messes of potato, were bobbing and swimming leisurely about; a flood of rich and reeking gravy swirling every where around them. Into this deep vessel was thrust a long ladle, all ready for its bailing out into the dishes of the hungry diners.

What with the continuous buzzing of conversation kept up by the men, who were ranged orderly around the room, and the continual bustle of Mr. Hipharpy and his two obsequious assistants, there seemed quite confusion enough for any place. Yet it was all pleasant. The breeze drew faintly into the room through the open windows from the water, and felt in a degree refreshing.

Mr. Hipharpy—the host of the occasion—wore no jacket, though he had spread a little white apron before him; and being, moreover, so much taken up with getting the things on the table, he scarcely took time to observe whether that day had brought him any new customers or not. He had a bald, and rather venerable crown, and his round and protruding forehead shone like glass. A beady perspiration stood on his knobby temples, the legitimate effect of the exertions incident to the noon-day meal. When nothing else engaged him, he went

with a brisk step up and down the length of the table, driving knots and herds of flies before him with a feathery brush that he wielded with great dexterity.

Many an eye, that had before then looked the terrific dangers of the deep right in the face, was fixed with equal concern upon the movements of the landlord then. Many a dry mouth watered, waiting for the expectant signal. One spoke to another of his several choices in the matter of fish, and fowl, and flesh ; and added random opinions regarding vegetables, and the modes of cooking them ; yet for no single moment was the person of Mr. Hipharpy suffered to go out of their sight.

Finally the word was given.

Has the reader ever seen a herd of buffalo—but no ; there is little likelihood of that. Let me drop simile, and come close up to the reality. Well—there was hardly any such thing as arranging them in particular seats ; if that had ever been the custom. Had all the waiting-men of one of our hotel-palaces been mustered there in force, their proffered services would have been blown aside like very thistle-down in a wind-gust. Nobody seated them ; they seated themselves. Nobody was at hand to help them, for they helped themselves. Every man fixed his eye fiercely on just what he thought he wanted, and his quick hand followed close after.

Gabriel's friend had secured a seat apiece for them both, and they sat up at the feast with the others, the sailor looking out that the boy got as good as the best, and all he wanted.

How the gravy flew and spattered all around the large tureen ! How the great white cod flapped their sides—in piecemeal, to be sure—on every plate around the board ! How the strong arms were crossed and recrossed on their way to halibut, lobster, and flounder ! And

then, if one could not help himself, he rose to his feet, and, leaning far over the table, harpooned his fish with his fork, and brought it up finally alongside!

One would have been amused, too, to observe how suddenly the noise had stopped. All conversation now was quite at an end. Eating took precedence. The continual clatter of knives, and forks, and plated spoons, sounded like the ring of clashing muskets and bayonets in battle. No one seemed to mind his neighbor at all. None thought of any thing but himself, and his dinner.

Mr. Hipharpy hurried back occasionally from the little retreat of a closet to which he had betaken himself, and glanced over the table to assure himself that nothing went wrong; and then plunged immediately into his retirement again. During the dinner-hour his face was always redder than ever. The two assistants, however, kept continually sailing at their leisure up and down the long shores of the table, albeit very little demand seemed to be made for their services.

The board itself furnished a conglomerated scene. To enumerate the kinds and varieties of fish there were upon it, or the numerous methods—approved and otherwise—of their preparation, would necessarily lay under contribution the descriptive talents of an eminent *chef du cuisine* himself. To tell how many said they preferred clams to chowder—and how many chowder to lobster—and how many halibut to flounders—and so on to the end of the lengthening chapter, would be little less than a hopeless and unsatisfactory labor.

At length one pushed back. And another.

“Ain’t you goin’ to take any pie, Jack?” said a friend to the next at his elbow. “I did n’t see it.” “Nor pud’n’ neither?” “Ha! ha! I’m a good deal better

off 'n I thought I was! Of course I eat pies; an' pud'n's as well! Hand over, will ye?"

Little Gabriel could scarcely economize his time so skillfully as to allow himself leisure for seeing all that his eyes fairly ached to see, and for eating his dinner too; and the few and frequent words of the friend next him, who seemed quite anxious to fat up his young *protégé* at a single meal, helped to interrupt very seriously both the course of his observations and of his appetite.

At about the winding up of the several fish courses, a man who sat at one of the ends of the long table rose in his place, and rapped briskly two or three times with his knife-handle. Instantly a double row of expressive eyes was directed toward him, all the heads leaning down over their plates.

"Shipmates," said a pleasant-looking man, seeming half sad and half humorous—"I must tell you 't I did n't git up to try to speechify at all, for that's what a feller like me can't pretend to do; but I've come across some-thin' I felt as though I wanted to tell ye about. It's a piece o' misery I've seen—raal right-down wretchedness, that orter be 'tended to. When a storm's a brewin', yer know, we take in sail. I've seen a storm a-comin' on a person lately, an' the sail all took in, too. But that's no help in this case. It's a case 't wants relievin'; an' all I want to-day is to ask if you won't lend a feller a helpin' hand. Shipmates, will yer do it, now?"

He paused. The eyes of the sturdy men went from the face of the speaker to the faces of one another, and the inquiry went round the table, in low voices—"Who is it? Who is it?"

"It's the case of a poor widder," continued he, finally, "who's been a-sewin' her life away for a man, and's got so fur' reduced that she can't sew no more; and that's

jest all there is to it. The man orter help her himself—you 'll say. An' so he had. But he won't; he's too on-nat'ral to do it! He hain't got any soul, and so he 'll manage to escape what he 'd be sure to get otherwise. But that's neither here nor there. The poor woman wants help; and she wants it now, if she ever gits it. Will ye all give us a lift?"

At once every hard hand found its way to a pocket. They no more thought of such a thing as suspecting the perfect integrity of the speech-maker than men on 'Change would be guilty of omitting that performance in the case of those who throng around them.

"I've been and seen the case myself," he told them again, "an' can certify it's a reg'lar genooine; there's no clap-trap, hocus-pocus about it at all. The woman's on a bed that's most likely to be her death-bed. She thinks so herself. All her comfort is jest one little girl, her only daughter; and she is a grief to her mother because she can't see what's to become of her. But I'm agoin' to try an' look arter that myself. Only for now, help me relieve the sufferin' of this poor sick woman, an' it 'll come round all right."

A murmur of voices arose on every side of him.

"I don't ask only for little," he added, "an' don't expect any body here's got very much to give, anyhow. But jest let the heart have fair play for once, an' Heav'n 'll make it all right in the end in poor Jack's account, I know!—Here's my hat; an' here's two silver dollars. Pass her round! Pass her round!"

As he clinked his hard money in the hat he handed it to his neighbor, who performed a like operation and then passed it on. It made the entire circuit of the table. It would have done a man's heart good to see the pleasure those sunburnt, hardy men seemed to take in

heaping up a little store for the sick widow. The hat came back to its starting-point again. With moisture making a film in his eyes, the man thanked them the best way he could in his homely words, promising to bring them a full report of the effect of their benevolence at no distant time.

And here was a blessed deed of charity done without any of the parade of committees, or of the ostentation of proud benevolence—done in the purlieus of wharves, and slips, and narrow alleys—done in broad noon-day, in the dining-room of a sailor's eating-house! There was no cold calculation in it, as if every chance was to be counted off on the ends of one's fingers before the step could be taken; there was none of the politic hesitation about it that chills before it warms and makes glad; it was only the spontaneousness of generous impulses flowing directly out of human and healthy hearts!

Gabriel's friend led him along back with him as far as he went, asking him all sorts of plain questions about his mode of life, and exhibiting to the boy a great deal of the sympathy for which he so much hungered. "At any rate," said he, as they parted on the corner, "you know where you can git a good dinner, any day you want one, don't ye? Jest whenever you feel hungry in the street, my lad, if it's about this time o' day, come over and stan' in the door of the Bread Basket, and wait till you see me! Will you do that?"

Promising compliance, though he hardly knew what he did do or say, he turned to see his mysterious friend swing his stout arms down a hot and dirty street, and then lost himself once more in the crowds and echoes that make the never-ceasing, never-silent ground-swell of the life of the metropolis.

He could hardly help comparing Isaac with such men

as he saw that day at dinner ; and wondered why it was that he, being apparently no poorer than they, should choose to follow such a strange mode of life as he did, when honest labor, in honest sunshine, was as ready for him as for any one of them. And pondering and wandering, the afternoon slipped wholly away, and his heart sunk within him as he thought of the report he must that night make to the man who mistakenly called himself the boy's protector. If vultures are protectors over lambs, then was Isaac one over the lamb he had inveigled within the easy reach of his terrible talons.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HIGHLY ENTERTAINING.

WHILE Mr. Dandelly was right in the midst of his search for something to say *in favor* of Mr. Holliday, flapping the leaves of his romance to and fro without a thought or an idea in his head, the latter gentleman himself stepped across the piazza. Dandelly looked up. "Who's that?" said he, as if he were alarmed about something. But before either of the girls could make him any answer, even had such been their inclination, their visitor entered the room.

"There," said he, laying a fragrant bunch of wild-flowers into the lap of Martha; "you must n't quarrel over them, now! I could n't stay to divide them. You must do that yourselves. Do you think you really can?"

"This is Mr. Dandelly," said Mary, her eyes kindling with a frolicsome feeling, while she pointed ever so slightly in the direction of their guest. "You are well acquainted with him, Mr. Holliday, I believe? At least he claims a pretty close kind of an acquaintance!"

The young author looked at the other, who was now timidly advancing a step or two to meet him, and merely bowed: it was a nod of the slightest degree of recognition in the world. Dandelly, who had unfortunately half thrust out his hand, saw at once the propriety of pulling it in again; which he did not without some little tremor

on the part of that member, and then resumed his seat. His color had suddenly changed, and his whole manner become embarrassed. Neither of the girls felt any particular desire to relieve him of the troublesome topic of his talk, but waited and watched to see him properly support the remarks he had but a moment before been indulging in with such flippancy.

"Just reading your book, Mr. Holliday," said he, quite obsequiously, and trying to regain his equanimity with a forced smile.

"Ah!" said the young author, looking from him to the girls, while he sat down near the table, "how did you know it was mine?"

"Oh, but the young ladies told me!"

"Yes," said Mary; "and from his conversation one might have been led to think he knew all about it even before we gave him the information."

"Why so?" inquired Mr. Holliday, with a pleasant look in his face.

"Oh, he seemed to be so perfectly acquainted with you," said Mary; "I thought of course you must have let him into the secret long ago."

"I don't know," rejoined the young author; "I think our acquaintance must be very slight at the best. Really, I can not say I have had the pleasure of—"

"You know I called down at your place?" broke in Dandelly, eager to get out of it now.

"When was that?" coolly inquired the other.

"Well—once when you was to work in your garding, you know—"

"Um!" said Mr. Holliday, trying to think of it all. If truth were to be told, the reader must know that to the mind of the young man the person and the manners of this brainless fop were as odious as is possible to be

imagined. He felt there was no such thing as putting up with him. His presence inspired thorough disgust, and nothing less. There was such an easy impudence about him, such cool effrontery, so much of that peculiar quality that never feels rebuked, simply because it hardly knows what a rebuke is—like the sturdy bravery of some soldiers, that is never vanquished because it is so ignorant of what that word means—that it required quite the full aid and comfort of all the cardinal virtues, with patience at their head, to even so much as put up with him. This idea had entered Arthur Holliday's head from the first interview.

"And I come to see you, you know, Mr. Holliday," went on the creature more eagerly still, "when you was out—"

They laughed aloud at that—the idea of growing intimate with a man by calling on him when he was not at home.

"And—and—and a good many other times," added he, rather confusedly.

"Yes," returned the author, slowly and after a pause; "I think I don't remember."

The eyes of Mr. Dandelly were twinkling industriously. Bold as he was, and unscrupulous as he sometimes was in expedients, for once he was forcibly struck with the idea that he had found his match. He felt that he had got into a corner. "If I had only gone out five minutes before," thought he; "but it's too late now to think of that! I'll make the best of 't, and get away as quick as I can!"

So putting on a countenance of more assurance, he was about to venture some kind and patronizing remark about the book he still kept in his hand, when he was forestalled by Mary herself, who was wicked enough to say to Mr. Holliday—

"Mr. Dandelly was just remarking, before you came in, that he had n't a very high opinion of your talents! Were you aware that he was a critic, before?"

"No, I was n't, indeed."

"Miss Rivers! Miss Rivers, now!" exclaimed Mr. Dandelly, half playfully, but a good big half petulantly.

"Sir?" said Mary, affecting much seriousness and dignity.

"It's hardly fair to do that! I don't think it is, now!"

"I like to have my friends acquainted with all the just and enlightened criticisms that are passed upon them," added she, as relentless as Fate itself.

"It's a good plan, I think myself," assented Martha, perfectly satisfied with the merited punishment she saw going on.

"I believe you said, sir, did you not," continued Mary, directing her question to the victim present, "that you had n't much opinion of these writers—scribblers was what you called them—that wrote such trifling things as stories?"

He begged with his eyes that she would keep silent; but she went on:—

"You said you could write as well yourself, I think, if you had but pen, ink, and paper, and were not too lazy; was n't it something like that you said, eh?"

"Yes, it was—it was," answered Martha.

"Well, and I could, I really believe," he blustered, hoping to take off the edge of the satire a little.

Mr. Holliday sat and enjoyed it. He said little or nothing, and there was no need of it. The girls were abundantly able to manage the case alone.

"How strange you do not turn your attention to literature!" said Mary. "Do pray take the big bushel off your light, and let the world have the benefit of its shine!"

He laughed with the rest—he did not know why.

“Perhaps your time is too much occupied otherwise?” suggested Martha.

“Well, I am kep’ rather busy, I allow,” said he, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

“Yes, but could n’t you just squeeze out an hour or so each day, that people might have the benefit of your productions in an intellectual way?”

“An hour, Mary!” exclaimed her sister; why, that’s absolutely throwing time away! Half of that—a quarter of it, you know, would be quite as much as is needed!”

“I like your book, Mr. Holliday,” broke out the uneasy fop, directing his expressiveless eyes to the young author. “That is, if it is yours; and the ladies say it is!”

“But you seemed to think only a few moments ago,” persisted Mary, “that you did n’t like Mr. Holliday’s writings; nor Mr. Holliday himself, for that matter; did n’t he, Mat?”

“I’m sure one would certainly have thought so, if any thing at all was to be thought about it,” replied her ready sister.

“There, now, how can you say, Mr. Dandelly, that you like the book? Besides, you’ve never read it at all! How can you judge of a work till you have at least paid it the compliment of looking it over?”

“Oh, no, no,” said he, quickly, catching at the tiniest straw that floated near him, “I don’t mean that I had read it! You don’t understand me, Miss Rivers; you don’t understand me, I see!”

“I’m afraid I do not, really,” said she.

“I meant, you know—”

“No, I don’t know.”

“—That I liked the looks of the book; now you know

that was what I meant, and all I meant; and the title struck me, too."

"Yes," suggested Martha, looking at Mr. Holliday, who had buried his burning face in the bunch of wild flowers that he snatched up again; "yes, but you thought that it was a waste of material, as it was; for you wondered how people could fancy a book that had n't gilt edges!"

"Cornered! Floored! Com-plete-ly down!" whispered Mr. Dandelly's dismayed heart to itself.

"Do you know the botany names of all them wild flowers you've got in your hand, Mr. Holliday?" asked he, struggling only to change the subject, he cared nothing how abruptly.

"Well, no, I can't say that I do, sir; I can give you their Yankee names, however."

"Oh, I s'pose I know them already. Be there very many flowers in the woods this season? I declare I've been so busy with myself that I ha'n't hardly had time to go into the woods! It's my delight though when I can find good company to go with!"

"Is it? Yes," slowly returned Mr. Holliday, again plunging in among the laurels, honeysuckles, wild roses, anemones, and what-nots that helped swell the bunch.

"You don't find much company hereabouts, I think you said once?" remarked Mary, determined to give him no rest yet.

"Very little, very little, I assure you. Dreadful dull all round here; never got into such a place; place pleasant enough, but nobody in it; declare—wish there was more folks like you here; soon be lively in such a case as that! But you see I shan't stay here long. I've got one or two short visits to make round among my friends; and then, says I, away for Saratogy! Wish you was all goin'! Why can't you?"

"If you'd only promise to show us about there," said Mary, half laughing.

"I would!" spoke he, very emphatically. "I would! I'd show you all the lions there be there, every one of 'em!"

"You are really very kind, sir," returned Martha, "but we shall unfortunately be obliged to stay among the lambs out here this summer! I have no doubt your services would be invaluable to any one, however."

"No, nor I," added Mary.

"Oh, well," returned he, laying down the book and getting up himself, "I guess I shall have to get down to the village again, if I think of gettin' to the Springs; so I must bid you good day. With a wave of his hat, "Mr. Holliday, I shall be very glad to call on you agin, whenever you'll be at home; I'd like to go into your room, and look over your books, and git a little better acquainted generally, you know;—"

"Yes, yes; I think I know, sir!" shiveringly replied the other, while he shrugged his shoulders as a sort of signal for the girls to laugh.

"And I hope you'll let me introduce you to my friends, the Laws, some day, ladies," he added, addressing the girls, who could not keep their countenances sufficiently to look him in the face. "You'll like them, I know! Good-day! good-day!"

And he slid and slipped out through the door.

If ever mortals were rejoiced over a welcome riddance, these sisters were over the departure of their most unwelcome guest.

"Now I hope he'll know enough to understand that he's not wanted here," said Mary.

"He won't," said Martha.

"No, that's what he won't," added Arthur, with earnestness. "I'll venture to say that he'll be hanging

around me within a week. He's one of that class of acquaintance that you can't pull off, nor shake off. He's as tenacious as a very leech; and his visits are quite as exhausting to one. But let's drop that subject, I think he has gone through his share already."

Chatting now on flowers and now on books, the girls proposed to walk down to Mr. Holliday's little box some pleasant morning, and see his garden beds, walks, flowers, and so forth. It was something that they had had in contemplation for a long time, and now for the first time dared to mention.

"The flower beds!" exclaimed Arthur, smiling. "The garden walks! I don't know what you'll think of them, I'm sure. They are just to keep my leisure employed, and to give me a little exercise. As for the beauty you'll find about them, I think it's nothing but simple nature."

"And that's always beauty enough," chimed in Martha.

"Yes, I like nothing as well as nature. Art can hardly expect to improve upon it. It may possibly set off a bit of natural beauty to a little better advantage; but that is all it can do."

"And we sha'n't be satisfied with looking at your garden only," said Mary. "We're something of the mind of your very intimate friend, Mr. Dandelly; we shall want to look into your study, and see where you do your work."

"Yes, yes, yes!" assented Martha, enthusiastically.

"You certainly shall be welcome," said Arthur; "but let me warn you not to put your expectation too high. I've got nothing but a little crib down there; a plain room with two small windows, and a table and chairs. You'll not be long looking over my books, either; I can almost count them to you now on my fingers' ends. But

if you come you may depend on my doing what I can to entertain you."

"May we? may we?" eagerly returned Martha, her eyes sparkling. "Then I shall ask to have you read us some of your manuscripts!"

"Oh, yes, yes!" added her sister. "By all means!"

"I don't know about—"

"Ah! ah, sir! but your promise now! We shall insist, depend upon it! You promise to entertain us in the best way you can; and we propose to have you read some of your own productions to us, as being the best way we can think of. Now what else can you possibly do but keep your word? We'll hold you to it! We'll hold you to it, won't we, Mary?"

They persisted stoutly; and after proper protestation, and entreaty even, he was obliged to yield. And they looked forward to the time with eagerness when they should enjoy the agreeable sight of an author reading his manuscript aloud, in his own little study, surrounded with an atmosphere all his own.

Perhaps but few would think it a matter of such peculiar interest, however, in these millennial days when almost every other reader is an author himself!

CHAPTER XXV.

COUSINS.

It happened to be just about this very time, too, that Henry Dollar—the son and idol of that miserably rich man, Jacob Dollar, and cousin of Duncan Morrow, as has been already narrated—concluded to pay another of his visits, often repeated of late, to Miss Ellen Worthington. Not that it may, as a necessary consequence, be understood that he occupied a post of special favor or regard, in her eyes; for that was what very few indeed could really expect to do—her favorites being rare and carefully chosen. Yet thus far he had been allowed to call by a sort of sufferance on her part. One of her friends had introduced him into the house, rather yielding to the young man's importunities than to his own satisfied judgment, and in this manner he had smuggled himself into what he boasted of as being an intimate acquaintance with her.

What his hopes were, he had carefully kept to himself. If he was possessed of any thing like expectations in this direction, no one knew it. Having effected what he had by the interposition of a friend, he deemed it unnecessary that he should further expose his purposes to any one.

"Henry," his father said to him now and then, for he had got an inkling somehow of what was going on, "Henry, I hope you know how to manage these matters

skillfully. You need n't be in any great hurry ; but be very careful, mind you, to keep any body else from getting before you ! Be on the look out for that !”

So of course the young man watched sharp and narrowly. His heart was not specially enlisted, but his selfishness was.

Having entered on his plans, whatever they might be, nothing was so deeply and thoroughly aroused as his ambition. Conceited to a pitch that is not fairly describable, he counted on nothing less than the complete realization of his wishes. Defeat, nay, even delay, was a contingency for which his mind made no provision. He suffered himself to look at but a single side of the subject, and that the side to which he had married his hope and his selfishness.

Smartly dressed, therefore, and very highly perfumed, he was on his way, in the evening, to Ellen's house. “It's not too late, I hope,” said he to himself, as he reached a corner not far from the locality, and took out his gold watch. The light from the gas-lamp fell on the dial, and he saw the hour.

“Nine o'clock, hey ? Later than I thought ! However, sha' n't stay very long !” and he thrust the watch back into the fob, and regarded carefully all the houses along the street till he reached the one he was about to enter. Arriving at the foot of the flight of stone steps, he descried an individual at that moment coming leisurely down. His eyes widened, for he saw that the stranger was a gentleman.

“Who can that be, now ?” went through his mind, quick as lightning.

He waited till he came down and stood in the blaze of the lamp ; and then, shading his eyes carefully with his hand, he gazed exactly into the other's face. The latter

stopped likewise, undoubtedly incited to do so by the perfect coolness of him who was scanning him.

"Ah! yes! I see now!" said young Dollar, in a tone of affected contemptuousness.

"Do you?" replied the other, without any apparent need of affecting the contempt he so thoroughly felt. "One would think you found it rather a difficult matter to see."

"I think I've seen you before, at all events," remarked Dollar. "It's not so very difficult to recognize you, I can tell you. You've been calling here?"

"Suppose I have? What follows? Yes, as you say, you have seen me before. You confess that yourself. I'm to be seen, sir, by daylight, very often.

"Morrow? Duncan? That's your name, I think?"

"Quite at your service. I write that name, with the last name first, however, very often in my hats."

"Faetious, eh? Demme, but who'd have thought it?—You came out of this house, I believe?"

"Well, what of that? You appeared to have found it out before I reached the bottom step. Yes, I did come out of there! I want to know what follows!"

"You've been in there to see Miss Worthington—Miss Ellen—a very particular friend of mine? You have, have n't you?"

"Upon my word, I have n't fallen in with so ready a guesser, this many a day! I declare, I must confess you quite surprise me!"

"Do I, though? Demme! but I'll do that thing for you yet in another way! You sha'n't call this the last time! It's nothing to what shall come!"

"Always at your service, I suppose you understand," said Duncan.

"Perhaps you sometimes think of it, that you have the honor of being a cousin of mine?"

"It seems to me," returned Duncan, "that I have been made aware of some such unpleasant accident of birth. But what of that? I hope you are not going to presume too much on my acquaintance, just in consequence. I could n't very well help it, you know! All I can do is to make the best of it!"

"Help it!" sneered the galled dandy. "Help it! Demme now! If I—no!—accident of birth!—help it! Demnition blast these country upstarts, that try to creep into better men's places! They ought to be taught their place!" and he turned half away, in the tempest of his disgust.

"If you design to begin any educational teachings with upstarts, Mr. Dollar," returned Duncan, perfectly cool and self-possessed, "may I not be allowed to suggest that you inaugurate the process with yourself? That is ground that you can have perfect liberty to travel over; and be assured besides, no one will molest you on it! Good-night, sir! I really must not delay any longer."

And before the other could collect his scattered thoughts, exploded as they all were by his blast of passion, Duncan had left him standing there quite alone.

Excited more than he thought he could be, by an interview that had such an unsatisfactory termination for him, he dashed up the flight of steps, and violently rung the bell.

It so happened that Ellen herself had waited on Duncan to the door, and held it a little ajar as he went down the steps; and when she unexpectedly caught the sound of his voice in conversation with another person, she very naturally continued to hold the door open to see who it was, and what it meant. Perhaps she was a little anxious. But as soon as she made the discovery that the second person was only Mr. Henry Dollar—knowing somewhat

by this time of the peculiar relations that subsisted between the two cousins—she continued a listener to the end. And just as she saw Duncan turn abruptly away, she softly shut the door, and slipped off into the sitting-room with a flushed face and a beating heart.

A moment after the ringing of the door-bell, Mr. Dollar, the younger, was ushered by the female servant into the presence of Ellen, and accosted her with what grace and self-possession he happened to be master of. Ellen received him as politely as she could, though any but he would have been chilled through with her indifference. It was not haughtiness, for that quality did not legitimately belong to her nature; it was nothing but sheer indifference. She feigned nothing at all.

It naturally took the young man some time to compose himself, after his late excitement; and he talked—almost alone—of the weather, the last opera, and himself.

Ellen regarded him with a searching look now and then; and each time the recollection of the conversation just had on the walk flashed over her mind, she could not keep down the rising feeling of absolute disgust that sought to control her.

“I little thought it was so late, Miss Worthington,” said he. “It was my intention to call before; but one thing or another delayed me. The evenings at this time of the year slip away so rapidly!”

“Undoubtedly you attended to what you considered the most important matters first,” she returned. “Some persons always make it a point to do so, business people especially!”

“Ah, no, Miss Worthington! No, indeed! Do not mistake my meaning, I beg of you.”

“What could your meaning be, then, pray? I’m sure

you seemed to express yourself very plainly. How did you mean, sir?"

Unaccustomed to group his mental resources together for any decided and energetic effort, he plunged into an answer to her question entirely at random, floundering along through in the best way he could.

"Oh, nothing at all, Miss Worthington! Nothing more than that I was delayed—I stopped here and there with a friend—all very common, you know—nothing at all out of the way for any body to do, even when they are going on highly important business—certainly nothing disrespectful to you, Miss—Miss—"

"Yes, I think I understand you," interrupted Ellen. "I was sure I did before."

For a moment he felt flat. What that peculiar state of feeling might have been in Mr. Dollar's breast, perhaps could not be so well asserted; but readers generally will appreciate an expression conveying to their minds a mixed-up idea of a sensation composed about equally of being "all-over-ish" and "down."

He recovered, however, as all light bodies will recover in good time, and began upon another topic.

"Met an individual just now," said he, "right on the walk here. Rather startled me."

Waiting for Ellen to make some sign of interest in his narrative, but to no effect, he added again—

"In fact, he was coming right down your own steps! I stopped, and he stopped; and we looked each other straight in the face. I'd seen him before, you must know, and I happen to be pretty well informed about him. I must confess, though, I was a good deal surprised to see him coming from here! Had he called on you?"

"I am willing to answer your question, Mr. Dollar: a gentleman has called here this evening."

"And just gone?"

"Only a few moments; yes."

"It was Mr. Duncan Morrow?" he still pursued.

Ellen was vexed; yet she kept her feelings under control. "Yes," she finally answered; "it was."

"You are acquainted with him, then?"

"You might well judge so, I should think, from his coming here. Yes, I am acquainted with him; quite well acquainted with him."

"Yes—yes," he replied, smoothly and deliberately. "I was going to say that I felt pretty well acquainted with him myself!"

"So I should think you ought to be," said she. "It would be a very strange thing if you were not."

"Why would it be such a very strange thing, Miss Worthington? I think I don't exactly understand you, do I?"

"You are cousins, are you not?" asked she.

His face colored. "How should you know that, now?" said he, off his guard a little. "I declare! Who told you, Miss Worthington?"

"Suppose I choose to keep all such matters to myself? what then?"

"Oh, well; oh, nothing!—nothing, I'm sure! But if he is my cousin"—and here the black blood began to do its work in his veins—"even if he is my cousin, I can't say that we have any personal acquaintance! That's a thing I—"

"Yes; but you just now said you knew him thoroughly!" she persisted.

"And so I do; but it's not by personal intimacy, let me tell you! It's only what I've heard of him—through my own father, for instance!"

"Ah!" returned she; "then there is probably some good reason for this coolness between you?"

"Of course there is!" he said, eagerly. "You must have seen that in a moment, for yourself! The fact is, Miss Worthington"—he grew confidential—"I know this cousin of mine so well, that I—I—I can't allow myself—a-h! a-h!—really, I could n't think of—of—having—" and right there he stuck fast.

Ellen, however, offered no remark. She was sick of the spectacle of which chance had made her an unwilling observer.

"The truth is, Miss Worthington," continued he, leaping clear out of the tangle of his former sentence, "I don't myself imagine that he knows who he calls on when he comes here to this house! In fact, I know he don't; and I took it upon myself to tell him as much, as I met him but just now down at the foot of the steps! Possibly you don't yet know much of him yourself, do you?"

"Really, Mr. Dollar," she answered, with increasing collectedness, "I must say that you are uncommonly thoughtful for me!—uncommonly so! For the future, however, let me beg that you do not put yourself to quite so much trouble! I trust you won't, sir!"

"It's no trouble, Miss Worthington, to do what one considers nothing but his duty to his friends. I merely thought I would warn you a little, you know—put you on your guard somewhat for the future. Nothing more than this, I assure you. I certainly hope you'll excuse me for what I've done; it's all in the way of friendship, you know. I see plain enough that you can't know who and what this individual is. I do! I know him clear through! He's my own cousin, you see!"

"Yes; but I should be the very last to suspect such a relationship," returned she, satirically.

"Eh?" said he, obtusely; "should n't you suspect it, though? should n't you? Well, I believe in my heart

that nobody else would, either ! But I'm quite at liberty to say of him—being my cousin—that he is n't fit to go into ladies' society ! That 's what he is n't !”

“So far as his admission into this house is concerned,” replied she, “I trust, Mr. Dollar, that you will allow me still to remain my own judge.”

“Oh, certainly—certainly ! I did n't think for one moment to interfere where I had no right to !—nothing of that kind, let me assure you !” he answered, in perfect confusion.

“I am myself very happy to say of Mr. Morrow,” continued Ellen, with decisiveness, “that whatever you may think of him, I regard him as a perfect gentleman !”

“Um !” was the only sign of life he gave under this.

“Furthermore,” went on the now thoroughly indignant girl, “whoever you may imagine I allow to call on me in my own house, I am hardly in the habit yet of receiving visits of this character. I am not willing to be made a common recipient of the slanders of others, whether cousins or not. I regard it as no flattery at all to my own tastes, whatever it may argue for my principles. It is but a very poor estimate of my character in any light. And as such is the case, Mr. Dollar,”—she was rising to her feet—“I shall take this opportunity both to bid you good-evening and to assure you that further calls from you will not be at all agreeable to me.”

And with these calm but emphatic words, majestically as a queen, she walked out of the room and disappeared.

It was quite a minute before the crushed young adventurer knew where or what he was. He could have gladly called on the rocks and the mountains to fall on him—or the floor to open beneath his feet and swallow him up out of sight. He saw nothing—he heard nothing—he knew nothing. His brain swam ; his eyes glared

and rolled wildly about in his head. He sat like one in the mazes of a deep dream that had suddenly closed all around him—in the final clutch of a secret power from which he had no longer any hope of escape.

The words of his father recurred to him—never to allow himself to be supplanted by another; and remembering what was done, his blood boiled within him furiously. When he came quite to himself again he saw that he was left alone. Rising hastily to his feet, he gnashed his teeth and clenched his hands in a fury of passion; and muttering to himself, he rushed out swiftly through the door.

“That d-e-v-i-l!” exclaimed he, as he got to the hall-door, striking his two hands together. “I’ll be even with him, and this very night! He can’t do such a thing as this and not feel my revenge! yes, my revenge! That’s the word!”

On reaching the pavement his resolution seemed to have taken perfect shape. He hurried along at an almost frenzied pace, straight to a rendezvous where he appeared to be quite well acquainted; and knocking softly at a door in one of the upper rooms of a mean old building, his heart beating violently against his breast, he was immediately waited on by an individual who, from the alacrity of his movements, must have comprehended in a moment the meaning of the appeal.

The door opened just enough to show the head of Isaac Crankey, who peered into his visitor’s face carefully, and then with a whisper welcomed him in.

Isaac Crankey and Henry Dollar! When the world beholds the fusion of two such natures it may certainly count on something being about to happen that will be worth its attention!

CHAPTER XXVI.

ALL IN CONFIDENCE.

LESS than an hour afterward, Henry Dollar having ended the strange and mysterious interview, Isaac got up from his chair, walked a few times as in deep thought across the floor of the room, and finally bent down over little Gabriel in the further corner to see if he still slept. Yes, he slept. The sight of that pale young face, with the expression of anxiety and internal suffering set so deeply upon it, should surely have awakened tenderer feelings in the heart of him who was so rapidly enfolding himself in the meshes of crime. But he felt no risings of remorse—none of conscience—none of uneasiness even. His face was as stony as his heart. There was upon it now that marble look of desperate resolution, that seemed already to have petrified his entire nature:

Turning away from the sleeping boy he lit his pipe, and went carefully out of the room. In the darkness he groped his way along the entries and passages till he found himself at the door of his intimate and confidant—the outcast Kate.

“Kate, old girl, I declare!” said he, as he opened suddenly upon her.

“Well, Isaac,” said she, pleasantly, in return, looking up at him as he entered the apartment.

She was sitting in a low chair, with an old wooden chest drawn out before her into the middle of the floor;

a candle burned dimly on the lid of the same, and by its uncertain light she was engaged in examining the equally uncertain colors of her little store of faded and worn-out finery. Perhaps she had gone through this process a hundred times before, yet it seemed to interest her just as much on each occasion of its repetition. Now she held up a crushed and crumpled hat to the light, turning it over and over and round and round in the course of her examination. Now it was a bit of an exceedingly broad and gaudy ribbon that she subjected to the test of her examination, whose hues had so retreated into the original groundwork, or had so perplexingly combined themselves in the making-up of an anomalous color that she knew nothing what to think either of their complexion or their value. Again she flirted a scrap of a shawl—of some dazzling silk—across her shoulders, and arched her neck with a pride that was but mere mockery, to see for herself how such things became her still. Or she spread out some old dresses, once flashy, but now faded, over her lap, and wondered if they would not yet make a show for her somewhere in that obscure neighborhood.

And sitting there all alone this thoroughly degraded being sought relief from her sterner thoughts in thus trifling with the very insignia of her shame.

The entrance of Isaac, however, seemed to interrupt her in her solitary occupation; for immediately on his accosting her she looked up at him, hurriedly crowded and jumbled all the articles together in both hands, and with an activity that might truly be said to be peculiar to her sex, swept them in a moment into the chest. It was done almost before her companion could seat himself.

“Luck again, Kate!” said he, his eyes dilating as he looked at her.

"What?" she inquired, with manifest interest in her countenance.

"Ah—but Kate! I've had a good leader lately! Yes, an' I've had it only this very night! Only a few minutes ago! I've come right over here with it, you see!"—and he let his eyes go on sparkling with his pleasure, while he drew out his pipe with all the energy of a highly excited man.

"Now tell us what 'tis, Isaac!" said she, pleadingly. "Tell us all about it!"

"Well, as for that, I did n't very well see how I could help it, for I tell you a'most every thing; but it's to be done only on one condition; you know what that is I guess!"

"What, Isaac?"

"That what goes into your ears don't get out at your mouth! Do you understand?"

She turned upon him a look of affected contempt, as if she could not help pitying him for his want of faith in her. "I—tell!" sneered she, curling her lip. "You don't know me, then! No—nor you never did!"

"But I don't know as you ever was guilty o' 'peachin', Kate," he returned, flatteringly. "I only wanted to put you on your guard! You promise, do ye?"

"Not to tell?"

"Yes; that's all."

She held up her right hand high above her head, as if in the act of taking a solemn oath. The formula seemed to be perfectly understood by her companion, who merely nodded his head, and exclaimed in an undertone—"All right!"

"Now then, go on," said she, crossing her arms upon her lap. "My ears are both open, you see."

"Very well! Here it is, the whole on 't; I v'e had a

visit jest now from a flash; a youngster; a reg'lar—wal, you can guess what else. He thinks he knows a thing or two; but I can tell him that little Billy Bottles there 'd tell him more 'n one day than he 'll ever learn for himself in a fortnight!"

"He 's raw, eh?" asked Kate.

"Somethin' so, he is; but not very overmuch, though, all told. But as I was a-goin' to tell ye, he's come for a job! An' he's after me! That 's all there 's about it."

"D' ye know who he is, Isaac?" she interrogated, dropping her voice still more.

"Know him? Yis, an' so do you, Kate! I know him well; and something consid'able about his goin's and doin's."

"Who is he, I wonder? Who is he, Isaac?"

"Why, it 's nobody but old Jacob Dollar's boy—that rich old wharf-rat, that don't care much what he does, so he feathers his own nest nice an' warm! Old Dollar, you know, Kate, that walks sometimes as proud 's a bird of a good deal finer feather! All money, ye see! It'll run, jest like water! Money makes things right, come what will. An' money, Kate," added he, in a whisper that in that half-lighted apartment seemed almost sepulchral, "is jest what Isaac Crankey's after this blessed minute! He's been without it long enough! It must be had, you see, no matter who pays the bills!"

"That 's all well enough," returned the woman; "I like that; but what 'n the world 's the boy after? So young, you know! And his father so well off! What is there in this world to trouble such a one as him? If 't was such a case as mine, now—"

"Why," said Isaac, drawing a little nearer to her, "I'll tell ye; you must understan' that fust an' last, I've helped him a little, this very same youngster, jest as I

have his father afore him; and now all he wants is for me to try hard for him at a new turn. This is it, Kate; an' you 'll keep it all to yourself, I know; he's got an enemy, and that enemy happens to be a relation, too. That's what makes the matter so much the worse. Strangest thing in the world to me how much stronger these relations hate one another than only common folks do! There ain't no accountin' for 't, that ever I heerd on! Seems as if they 'd a good sight rather tear one another's hearts out, than live peaceably and quiet together, if they could's well's not!"

"Has his relation damaged him any?" pursued Kate, becoming further interested in the story. "Is't a man or a girl?"

"It's nobody but his own cousin, Kate—his own blood cousin! That's what he told me himself! And he hates him, because he's right in his way! That's nat'ral enough, too, for all 't I see. And now this is jest the style the case stands in; you know somethin' about law, Kate, an' this is the law look'of 't: Dollar *versis* Morrow—Isaac Crankey counsel for the plaintiff. T'other party don't seem to have none; manages his case for himself, p'raps; but we can tell better about that, by-'n-by."

"And Kate Trott, lawyer's clerk!" she screamed out, with a silly laugh at her own sickly idea.

"Cert'n, if you wish! Cert'n I say to ye, Kate!" said he, relapsing into sudden thoughtfulness, and dropping his eyes to the floor.

"What does he want done for himself, Isaac?" she pursued, seeing him disposed to silence. "Can I be of any help about it? I never flinch, ye know, Isaac!"

"No, you can't," answered he. "I wish 't you could, though. No, I know you never flinch, Kate; I know 't you allers stan' to the guns, till the last one's fired!"

Give me you, for all any body else now! I seem to know jest where to find ye! But I'll tell ye what this young chap wants to have done," he added. "He wants to git this cousin o' his—Morrow's his name, you understan'—jest put one side, out o' the way a little. Nothing more 'n that."

"Not—not. You don't mean, Isaac—"

"Wal, I mean any thing a'most, so 's he only don't come acros t' his track too often! That 's what I mean."

"But, Isaac, you would n't—you.—Isaac—"

"Yes, yes, I would; I'd do jest as I agreed to do, exactly! If I ever begun to do a thing, I'd carry her clean out!"

"But you did n't agree to—to—to—"

"Look here, now; jest let me tell ye what I did agree to, and then p'raps you'll understan' me better."

She became a breathless listener.

"I told him—this young Dollar—that if he'd fetch me his own name—Dollar, you see—in silver an' gold, jest as many times over as I was a mind to mark down for him on a piece o' paper, I'd stan' ready afterward to serve him any way, and of course the best way I could! That's jest the way 't was, an' no other. He did n't seem to wait very long to give me an answer, though; his young blood was up. I'd got eyes to see that plain enough; and he out pocket-book, an' chinked down the very dovers I wanted right into my palm—so! an' here they air, Kate, a-rattlin' together in my pocket now! Don't they jingle like pleasant music though? You don't know how warm an' nice they felt to my hand! Worthy as he is, Isaac Crankey hain't handled as much money 's that, all in one heap—wal, it's been a good many, many weeks, I can tell you!"

"Then you agreed?" she added, very thoughtfully, for

one who seemed to trifle with every thing in life, as she did.

"By George! but hain't I, though? Hear that money jingle agin! That tells the story! That's your answer!"

The woman slowly shook her head.

"Mind now, Kate," said he, "I don't mean to do one bit more 'n I've fairly contracted to; no, nor one whit less, either. If I make out with my job as well as he wants me to, he's a-goin' to come down handsom, so he says; an' 'll do the right thing by me. See 'f he don't!"

A second time she shook her head.

"What's that for now?" he asked, eagerly.

"Prap's he may do the right thing by you; but—"

"Yes, an' he will! I'm not the one that's at all afeerd o' that! He will do it!"

"But you look out," pursued she, "that you don't do the wrong thing by him!"

"By him? No, indeed, Kate! It'll be by somebody else, I reck'n, that that'll be 'done!"

"I'm afraid so."

"What!" he exclaimed, starting suddenly. "'T aint possible that you've turned! Aint a-changin' your tune, are you? Kate, I don't understand ye! I don't know what ye mean!"

"I would n't go about this work," answered she. "I would n't. There never 'll any good come of 't."

"What! *what!* WHAT!" cried he, three several times, and each time more emphatically than before.

"I'd let this business go, I say, Isaac," she persisted. "I begin to be afraid of 't."

Nothing could well exceed his great surprise at hearing these few words from her lips. This was the very last place in the world where he expected to have cold water thrown over his project. It immediately repented

him that he had been so confidently foolish as to mention the matter at all to her.

"P'raps you don't see fur enough ahead, Isaac!" said she. "I say to ye agin, I wouldn't do this thing; I wouldn't."

"I will!" he pronounced, quite as energetically. "I tell you now, once for all, I will!"

"No, I know you won't stop for nothin' now. You'll go on till you'll find you can't go no further. And then what? Who'll ontie your hands then for ye?"

He dropped his voice, and assumed a highly melo-dramatic style:

"The walls have got ears, girl! If they had n't, I could tell you that about this very same business that 'd make your hair stan' upon end! and about other business too, that you've had some o' the profits of a'ready. How do you know what I've been concernin' myself about this long, long time that's gone by? How 'll any body ever know? No, no, girl; let me tell you that I keep my own secrets after this! I tell you nothing more, I promise ye!"

As he delivered himself of these words, his lank body was bent far forward, his right arm extended, his forefinger pointed threateningly into the woman's face, and his dark eyes seemed to retreat further within his head, where they glowed as fiercely as fires blaze in gloomy caverns.

"You never need be afeerd o' me, Isaac," said she, soothingly. "Your secret's safe here, I can tell ye!"

"Do you think," returned he, with such slow and deliberate accentuation of the syllables of each word as made him look the native fiend, "do you think that if I believed you was agoin' to let out my secret, you'd ever go out o' that door alive ag'in?—No!"

She fairly trembled beneath the strong influence of his words. Yet she had the courage to say what still remained on her tongue to say.

"I would n't touch that money, Isaac. I believe there's blood on it!"

He only looked steadily in her face, making no reply.

"I'd jest go an' carry it back," she added; "and I'd wash my hands afterward too!"

"Carry it back!" sneered he, getting upon his feet again. "I guess you'll find Isaac Crankey never does a raw thing like that, now! If I did n't take it, why, Fillymug would; and where's the difference, I ask you? Carry 't back! I ruther guess I shall!"

With this decisive expression of his feelings, he went out through the door as quick, if not a great deal quicker, than he came in.

After he was gone, Kate sat alone and thought the matter over a long time; but still she felt that she could find no good reason for changing her opinion upon it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN AUTHOR AT HOME.

NEVER was there known a lovelier summer morning than that on which Mary and Martha Rivers shut the little gate of Mr. Holliday's yard upon themselves, and slowly strolled up the limited walk to his miniature porch. The door stood open, displaying a little seven-by-nine rustic hall, whose floor was spread with clean white matting, and against whose white washed wall rested a lounge, covered tidily with a pretty chintz. Around the two square posts that held up the porch, wound the runners and luxuriant shoots of a couple of white honeysuckles, whose blossoms, snowing the masses of foliage from top to bottom, breathed a fragrance about the place that gave it almost the air of a paradise. The sisters had hardly time to exclaim in low voices respecting the many charms that delighted their eyes, when Mr. Holliday himself came hurriedly forward to meet them; welcoming them to his nest—as he called it—with much cordiality.

First he led them into the little parlor on the ground floor, opening the windows and letting in the sweet airs of the morning. They sat down and looked out over the yard, admiring every thing. The room was small, and very plainly furnished; yet an air of refined taste was visible in both the selection and arrangement of the furniture, that betrayed in a moment the inner and truer in-

instincts of the occupant. Two pictures, rustic subjects, adorned the low walls—one a summer and the other a winter piece. Over the shelf was a colored representation of a platter of beautiful speckled trout; and on the mantel itself stood a basket of counterfeit fruit in wax, with real flowers strewn tastefully over them. A table was drawn into the middle of the floor, on which were spread new books, a portfolio of engravings, and a handful of hasty sketches of his own. And all this true refinement in an old wooden house in the country, a story and a half high, of a dark brown color, and squatted just under the back of a hill!

After satisfying themselves there, Martha proposed to him to go into his study; and Mary echoed the call with earnestness. So up stairs he took them, and ushered them into his diminutive chamber, where he said he kept his handful of books, and performed all his labor.

A snugger place it was hardly possible to conceive. The girls first expressed surprise, and then delight; yet there was nothing like a wealth of books in it, nor a superabundance of furniture. A straw carpet covered the floor, and a square deal table stood in the middle of the room. On this were lying, in indiscriminate confusion, books, manuscripts, pens, inkstand, and papers. Only a few volumes had marshaled themselves on his many shelves as yet, but his library was growing quite as fast as he grew himself, and no faster.

"Now we're going to have you read us what you promised!" called Mary, eager to enjoy all she could command. "We've walked down this morning almost on purpose!"

Arthur half protested. He was modest. He did not like thus to parade himself before others. But all that was no matter. He offered to give them whatever they

called for, to take home and read by themselves ; but even that would not do. They wanted to hear him read his own productions himself. And Mary threw her bonnet off her shoulders, and said she should certainly sit there till he complied with their wish.

Driven to an extremity like that, he went fumbling a little nervously among the heaped papers on his table, and finally drew out a handful of leaves from a manuscript that looked as if it had seen but a brief existence. Excusing himself the best way he could, and looking up to find nothing but the most fixed resolution in their eyes, he braced himself back, and nervously began :

“NEW REVERIES OF A BACHELOR.

“I never could tell exactly how it was that I had fallen into such a habit of dreaming, but perhaps that is no matter. At all events, there I was ; and there I had been for at least a couple of hours, settled comfortably in my deep arm-chair, feet high-perched on the jamb, and eyes buried in the dying and deadening fire-coals.

“The afternoon sun—it was in winter—touched up with a dim brilliancy the faded colors in the carpet, and died in the somber half-shadows that were retreating to the corners and angles of the room. Not so much as a lazy mote was sailing up and down the yellow pencils of light. The old house was still ; yet the stillness was no-wise oppressive. The huddled and shivering poultry might have been seen dressing a little their roughened plumage in the strips of sun beneath the fence, as they sometimes do on these wintery afternoons ; and the chimes of far-off snow bells, ringing down the lonely road, mingled somehow strangely in with the flowing current of my feelings.

“All that time I had been thinking about Love and

Marriage; and of those other supplementary topics that make a sort of fringe-work for these two. It was so easy—settled in just such a bachelor's chair, before just such a genial fire—it was so easy, I say, to convince Judgment that the Bachelor's life was the only true and complete life—no burdens on his back but his own; not a thought in the whole circle of his thoughts that did not come back to his own heart as its center; no anxieties without, so that his single conscience was satisfied within; no fears, no cares, no sorrows, no mourning!

“It all seemed so plausible to the heart that a bachelor's was a quiet and a contented lot; that his apartments were never any thing but a snugger; that his life was only a succession of rapid stages of benevolence; his hopes single, undivided, and rarely overthrown; his happiness little less than a perpetual fruitage of his growing desires.

“There was a nameless something about the condition of such a being that instinctively recommended itself to the sympathies; a breath of fragrance, exhaling from nothing but the name—bachelor! It took for granted—independence, freedom, comfort. It presumed absence of restraint, of every nature. It pictured a quiet, cosy present, and mapped out a calm and careless future.

“Only the unmarried man—and at this point I believe I settled myself far back in my chair—only the bachelor can tell you at all what life is, or how it goes. He is both of it, and in it; yet he is nowise so deeply interested as a participator, that he is worthless as an annotator. He ‘goes in,’ but never with rolled-up sleeves. He enjoys, and up to his very eyes; but never above them. With a good share of its labor lying ready for his hand, he seems rather to work like an amateur than as a slave!

“He takes quite as much comfort in seeing others drudge

and do as in drudging and doing himself. Rather than companions, others are chiefly the sources of his amusement. He would be lost with himself if others were like him ; for then all the fountains of his enjoyment would be dried up. He lives more a seer than a doer ; filling his eyes with sights, his brain with reflections, and his heart with solid, quiet, enduring happiness.

“And while I lazily brushed away a spark that the chestnut stick had seen fit to snap out upon my bosom—as if it would discover whether there were a heart of tinder within—I began to draw rapid outline sketches of the bachelor’s home-life, filling them in with such truths as my after reflections furnished, and clothing and coloring all with the glowing ruddiness of my now well-warmed feelings.

“To be the whole of your family—head and all ! To come home from a distracting day of business, and quietly sip your tea, and afterward, in slippered feet, doze pleasantly over your fragrant Havana ! To stir your own fire, just as often as you choose, without the fear of burning baby, who, perhaps, sits crouched at your feet, spitting on the delicate embroidery of your slippers ! To read your favorite old authors undisturbed, without a fierce and sudden cry from infantile lungs, to make turbid the winding streams of your thought ! To scribble verses to as many sweethearts as you may have, with no fear from quick and bright eyes over your shoulder ! To sit up as late as you will, enjoying nothing but your own society, or that of some other thoughtless one, full as happy as yourself ! To rise when you feel inclined in the morning, and even to deny yourself breakfast altogether if so you like it ! To be yourself—wholly yourself—and nothing but yourself ! To take time to look about you, as you get on in the world ; to be inestimably comfortable at all times, be-

cause none of the little prickly cares of a man of family beset the smooth path you have chosen !

“The choice words of wise old Burton come pat to your mind at times, and you repeat them aloud with an exulting fillip of your fingers—‘Consider withal how free, how happy, how secure, how heavenly, in respect, a single man is ; consider how contentedly, quietly, neatly, plentifully, sweetly, and how merrily he lives ! He hath no man to care for but himself, none to please, no charge, none to control him, is tied to no residence, no cure to serve, may go and come, when, whither, live where he will, his own master, and do what he list himself!’

“You are young yet ?—Well, well ; and so there is all the more of this rich harvest of happiness for you to gather into your heart’s granary. Young ?—Then why a wife ? Who better able to supply all the little wants of his condition than a young man ? With the youth you have, you hold health also, and active vigor, and impulsive and bounding spirits. What more, in this world, would you have ?

“Is it so necessary that a man with glowing impulse and heated ambition should slip his neck in a yoke, and bow meekly beneath its galling weight, when he might be holding his head loftily in the air, and snuffing only such breezes as blow from the high lands of his hopes ? Should aspiration needlessly put a bit in its own mouth, and strong reins in the hands of its more timid master ? Ought pleasure to give up its fair claims—at the very start, too—without becoming so much as a modest and moderate contestant ? Should freedom surrender all its most precious prerogatives, without a single murmur of complaint, and seem glad of the privilege besides ?

“But young and poor ?—Heaven help you, then ! What a curse were poverty now, with another and a tender

heart aching with the want you can not supply! What a coil does this monstrous serpent twine about your happiness, till it strangles the life out of it altogether! How you shudder as you come home at night, knowing full well that the oil and the meal are low, and the gaunt and famished wolf is at the door! How all your energies deaden, and how your ambition, just now blazing up so brightly, entirely goes out! How can you bear to see the tears trickling in silence down that pale face! How will your heart bear up against the daily denials—the repeated short-comings—the constant excuses and evasions—while it feels that it alone is responsible for all this woe!

“No—no! A thousand times—No! You will enter upon no such hazardous experiment as this. You will consent to contract no alliances for your heart, where the risk may come at last to make that heart bleed as it never bled before. Better, if poor—alone. There is none but yourself to suffer, then. A single mouth is all there is waiting to be fed. Only one body to be clothed. Only one set of wants to be supplied. If grief comes you can easily meet it alone; to see another plunged in it would but dishearten and distract you. If troubles multiply, the same heart that dared and defied them is able of itself to abide the peltings of its pitiless storm. But to drag down another into the depths of your own suffering—you can not; you will not.

“Or if you are well along in years? Quite over the dividing ridge of human life?—Well, and still your lot is rich in comfort, rich in ease, and quiet, and content, and all manner of blessings. The very juices of your enjoyment streak your ruddy cheeks. The pleasures of your free-and-easy mode of life leave their glow in your bright, full eyes. Hitherto your existence has been free from incumbrance and inconvenience; you resolve that it shall

always be so hereafter. Your heart shall remain at rest, even as your tired feet lounge in their loose slippers at evening.

“Look into the fire, then, and dream just as long as you will. No voice is near, to waken the echoes that have slept so long in your chamber, or to break the flow of sweet feeling that sets in such a placid current out from your heart. Press back your head into the cushion of your chair as deeply as you can; no noisy prattle shall threaten to drive away your coveted drowsiness. Throw up your heels as high on the jamb as you will; there shall come no complaint from your seeming misdemeanor—no sudden call to start you, like an impulse, to your feet again.

“It is an easy life; a reasonable life; a life of passive pleasure—of abiding and independent comfort. You love children, perhaps? Your old classmate has them in plenty. Caress them as much as you will. Play with them till they tumble your spotless shirt-bosoms, and crumple remorselessly your immaculate cravats. Toss them to the ceiling till they are giddy if you like the fun; or blow into their dimpling necks till they are ready to go off into fits for laughter. Why would you have such burdens on your hands continually, to repay you with but a half hour’s boisterous romping?

“You court female society; it is so refining—so exalting—so ennobling. What then would you do better than mingle in it whenever the taste inclines you? You are not tied down, hand and foot, in your choice, by a band as strong as that of necessity. You are free to go where you will; you are at home any where—every where; equally acceptable in all places; welcome alike at the parties, the routs, and the re-unions; and still—still a bachelor.

“Yes—a bachelor!—a happy, happy man! A being

whose wants need never outrun his means; an existence basing your enjoyment on your real right to enjoy; a perfect creature, because neither more nor less than an unit; complete in yourself, as in your aims, your hopes, and your happiness likewise; a beatitude—living, moving, and breathing; with a shelter for yourself, but none for perplexities or cares; an altar for your own heart, but not so large that you desire to share it with others; a breast uncantered with envy, and free from the capricious tempests of social feuds and family jars.

“Oh blissful, blissful life! Oh, blessed, blessed man!

“I think I must unconsciously have taken a hitch in my chair—or a brand may have broken suddenly in two, scattering the white ashes over the little hearth—or a parasite blue-bottle may have lit on my nose, demanding a spiteful brush from my hand. It is difficult now to recall what it was. Yet in some strange way a change seud over my spirit, and over the spirit of my dream, too. The current of my thoughts wore a new channel, and quite on the other side. And so I kept on sailing, little caring where it floated me, minding neither prow nor helm.

“And I swung lazily under the shadows of the tangled boughs on the opposite bank, and grew suddenly refreshed with the fragrance of new flowers, and felt the flush of a new sense steal over my heart, like soft sunshine nestling in a covert of dark leaves.

“I seemed all at once to see with other eyes. I breathed with new lungs. Strange sounds ravished my ears. I fed on melodies sweeter and more lulling than those of flutes, where but just now I heard not even the ripple of a pleasant echo. Beautiful vistas opened before me, where but lately my eyes shrank from the deep gloom. Little

cottages smiled through the green network I had imagined only a wilderness, peopling the picture till its life and reality were irresistible.

"Yes—with the tide I had drifted down into the still haven of quite another dream !

"There is her chair now, over against your own. Her dark eyes—you are looking into them all the time. The smiles that break out over her face—they light the whole of the dismal hearth of your heart.

"It is not a picture. It is not a toy to amuse and delight you. It is no myth that has danced into your bachelor apartments and sat down uninvited by your fire. It is a living creature—an impersonation of beauty ; every whit a charming ideal—yet every whit a charming reality, too.

"Feast your hungry eyes on her bright eyes. Let your heart run riot while you contemplate those waving ringlets, that dimpled mouth, those ripe red lips, and that graceful figure. Lay envy to sleep as your feelings flutter at such a vision ; and think no more of solitary quiet, and single comfort, and selfish content.

"She stirs the fire—and the honest blaze shines out like the sun in your face. She glides around the room, perhaps stopping now and then to run over the scrawls that are spread on your table—while only a quiet smile, with not a bit of sarcasm, betrays the fun she is extracting from your folly ; and can you once think so gentle a creature as that in your way ? She smooths out the table-spread ; and adjusts the folds of the window curtain ; and gathers up a book or two that have strayed to the floor ; and says, in a low voice—' There ! I think that looks all the better !'—and are you Turk enough to think such a being a ' nuisance ?' or to wish for a moment that she was quit of your premises ? or to lack gratitude for

the gentle spirit that shines out through all these little services?

"Just married, you are? You have sat down together at the hearth to talk it all over.

"There are the old folks—of course they must come in for their share. How bravely did mother look on while she was giving away her darling to a stranger! How generous the denial that was made for nothing but another's happiness! With what a hearty, holy zest was that blessing bestowed by the father while he rocked his child's head on his tempest-torn breast! They will all want to hear how she gets on; certainly shall they, even to the minutest items of your daily wedded life. They will wonder among themselves—brothers and sisters—if she is in the least homesick, and if her heart ever aches to see them once more. No—no! Not a bit of such a feeling as that, though she would gladly welcome them all to her own new home.

"It does not seem as if so sweet a dream could be any thing but a dream. It is too pleasant to be any thing more than an illusion. It can not be that all the desires of your heart, all the hopes of your ambition, all the dreams of your youth, are at last ripened and gathered. That your wife?—the very name makes you already half-start. You find yourself gazing fixedly upon her; more thoughtfully, too, that you may assure yourself over and over again of the real possession of so much happiness.

"Young—are you?

"Then there are so many more years of delight, of deep delight before you. Thank Heaven—for you may—that you were led to marry early; for the heart is quick in youth—and its impulses are a thousand times more fervid

—and its draughts of pleasure a thousand times more exhilarating than a score of years later.

“Then so much the closer will the tendrils of your feelings entwine, till, in after years, there shall be no wrenching them asunder. The sentiments have never yet been allowed time to take root ; but they will strike deeply into a soil now, from which all the winds and storms of after-life shall not be able to wrest them. And all the tastes, and fancies, and preferences, will now begin to take shape, giving your nature breadth and depth, and your character proportion. And the horde of petty prejudices—envy, and malice, and selfishness—all these will go back scourged to their dens, unable to effect a permanent lodgment in the disposition that has no room for any thing but love.

“So little time ago was your bridal ! It seems now long years of bliss. You wonder—no, you do not wonder—but you believe it will always be so, even to the end. End ? Of that you are in just no mood to think. This is nothing but the beginning. Who would be reaching forward into the gloomy shadows of the close at such a time as this ? Exactly on the threshold ; right in the pride of life ; just in the flush of hope ; with the round dome of your heaven frescoed all over with such charming dreams as in this life you may never dream again !

“And with youth, then with health, then with a noble aspiration. How grateful you are, to know that the rich fruit of your many labors will be shared with another ! How self-satisfied to feel that all your aims are unselfish, centering in another’s happiness rather than your own !

“Trials ? Oh, yes ; of course they will come. As soon expect to stay the blowing of the winds, when they start up from their lairs in the wilderness. And what if they do come ? What then ? Is the man living, young or

old, who is clear of them altogether? Can finger be pointed to a single heart that is not fretted sorely with perplexities, or distressed with cares, or torn, as by thorns, with disappointments and griefs? Are beings any where to be found in the body whose lives, from youth up, are not thickly beset with trials of health, trials of hope, and trials of happiness? Is human existence, then, such a pleasant cheat, that we live but to enjoy, whether the right has ever been earned or not? Are human concerns all so artfully dovetailed each into the other that there is no fear of even a slight jar in the vast complexity of the social machinery?

“Yés; but poverty! Who can bear that?

“You can. All can. The most of us have no alternative; but plod on wearily to the grave, its cloud by day, but never its pillar of fire by night, throwing down a shadow across our paths.

“But she will suffer! Surely, it were downright heartlessness to betray so guileless a nature into the wilderness of want. You have taken her from the lap of plenty; you can not behold her patient self-denial—her daily innocent evasions—her affectionate endurance, while you are struggling over the mountains of opposition or misfortune, in the hope of some day bettering your poor condition. The wasted flesh—the pinched cheek—the haggard look—the colorless lips—will not such daily sights wear the iron still deeper into your soul, till regrets rush in to break down the barriers your tenderness had built about your home?

“Ah, yes—but look straight and steadily into her eyes, and it is there that you shall read her ready answer. Courage is hers, a thousand times more than it belongs to you. Patience surrounds her like a coat of triple mail. Such as she possess endurance beyond what selfish and

superficial man ever dreamed. When you are able to sound the depths of her love, you can then understand the strong, martyr-like spirit with which she defies want, and invites the greatest sacrifices. There is that in her nature, that, much as you think you know of every thing else, you still know nothing at all about. Weaker than yourself, she is still many and many times stronger. If the bond between you be strained by trials, what then, so long as it can not break? And what wrenching can wrest asunder bands that have been forged in the mysterious smithy of love.

"If you want, will not she want, too? Will it not be the first and finest token of her devotion that she shares whatever Fortune denies you, as well as what it pours into your lap? And when your own astonished eyes behold the gratification these frequent denials for your sake yield her, will you not go to your tasks taking a secret shame to yourself that you fall short in your share of the endurance? or that you lack what is required of you in the fortitude? or that you betray the weaker heart in brooding over troubles that demand nothing but action and indifference to rout them one and all? Will you not take strength imperceptibly to your heart, and infuse a new vigor into your purpose, from daily contact with an example at once so lofty and so silent?

"Solitary comfort? Cigars and slippers? Do you talk of such things now? And if you selfishly weigh such trifles with the abiding happiness, are they able with all your pressing down to kick the beam? Solitary comfort! You would not call it comfort now at all. Slippers at evening, with your rich Havana, and your drowsy dreams! Why, can you not now enjoy these so much the more? What is there to hinder you? Will the picture of that sweet face, breaking out in smiles

through your blue and white smoke-wreaths, like an angel's face through the clouds, turn the current of your blood, or strike any thing like a chill to your heart? Will the consciousness of her gentle presence at your hearth, abridge by the veriest trifle the full enjoyment of your reveries, when her own endeared face and image go dancing through them all?

"Old authors, your favorites! Well; and is there any special tenure known, by the terms of which their rare and radiant fancies, their immortal images, and their strong and inimitable expression, are to be enjoyed by yourself alone? Is not their language rather for every appreciative nature? Are not their sentiments for all persons, and for all time? Will you lose a little of their light, merely because another wishes to borrow from it at your side?

"And there now she sits. She is your wife, the wife of your heart. No relationship on earth so close, so absorbing, as this. She feels what you feel; she loves what you love. If you come home weary to your hearth, all is ready for your comfort there; and in the stead of only gloomy silence, are pleasant and affectionate syllables that lift your spirits out of the fogs. Your embroidered slippers, so soft and inviting—there they stand ready for your feet. Your box of Havanas, there it is, with its rich russet color, got down from the upper shelf against your coming. Books—she knows your favorites already too well, and has laid them on the table just at your elbow.

"Will you smoke? She will chat so pleasantly for you the while, that your roll of weed will seem to you in comparison quite destitute of fragrance. Will you read? No ears more ready than hers, and no heart more hungry for sympathy with the thoughts of your well-thumbed au-

thors. Or sit idly, rehearsing the histories of the little day just gone! Thank Heaven for a companion who is able to make you wholly happy over trifles innocent as these!

"And then years will go by, wheeling off with their squadrons of cares and joys into the past. And in time the hair will become streaked with silver. And the luster will recede in the eyes. And the strength will become sapped in the limbs. Is it so comfortable a thought to you that you shall be all alone then? that your happiness will lie stranded like a battered old hulk, on the shifting sands of a strange shore? Doth not your heart bound with a richer, deeper, steadier pulse, when you feel that not alone, but with her at your side, you will totter along hand in hand, and finally 'go down the hill thegither?'

"Immediately upon this thought I started from my chair.

"'Benedick, or Bachelor!' cried I aloud. 'Who—who would be a bachelor!'

The author paused, and laid down his manuscript. Mary declared it was all delicious; she had enjoyed it every line. Martha, however, was silent. There was a deep flush on her handsome face, and her eyes kindled with an unusual expression.

"Now suppose we stroll about over my little garden," suggested Mr. Holliday, rising quickly to his feet. "It will certainly be much pleasanter than sitting here!" And they went out through the door. Yet all the way down the stairs, and all the way around the garden-walks, and indeed for all the morning after, the dream of the young author was brooding like a pleasant halo around the younger sister, and her heart confessed a secret delight that had never, never been known to it before.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SOBER RECKONING.

WHILE the evening sun was going down behind the long spires of the city, gilding them all till they looked like slender pencils of living light, and throwing a vail of splendor over roofs, gables, and chimneys ; and while the few who loitered about the streets adjacent to the slips and quays—men of business preparing to go home, or sailors and 'longshoremen sailing and drifting hither and thither in little shoals—seemed intent on nothing at all in the world, a young man was to be seen walking through the street on which Mr. Jacob Dollar enjoyed the wide renown of transacting business, glancing hastily at the numbers on the doors as he went along.

He stepped firmly, and his countenance wore a thoroughly manly, and therefore handsome expression. If one could, by such outward tokens as offered themselves, come to any conclusion respecting the nature of his business, it would readily be inferred that he was bound on an errand that might have been engrossing his thoughts for a long while.

It was so. The young man was Duncan Morrow.

As he arrived at the door of which he was in search, and to which was duly attached the narrow strip of tin inscribed with his uncle's name, he stopped short a moment, and taking a few long and deep breaths, ascended the stairs.

Again was his uncle alone; he could see that he was, through the little windows. "Is he always alone?" he could not help asking himself.

Opening the office door, he went boldly in, and there in the dim twilight confronted him.

"Good afternoon, sir!" saluted Duncan, with a bow that was likewise intended for a respectful one.

"Um!" exclaimed the other, in a gruff undertone, changing color a little. But no further reply.

"Never mind for that!" thought the young man. "This is no time at all to stand on ceremonies!"

"I've come to see you, uncle, privately," said Duncan, "on some business of my own. You are perfectly at leisure, I hope?"

"No—no; I'm not," eagerly answered Mr. Dollar, looking round angrily. "I'm not at leisure, sir. I expect a gentleman in to see me, every minute. He'll be here now, very soon; very soon, sir!" and he looked in the direction of the door, as if that imaginary person might be about to enter.

"Then I will leave just as soon as he makes his appearance," returned Duncan, not in the least disconcerted. "Meantime, let me go on with what I came to see you about."

And with all the deliberation in the world, he sat down.

Mr. Dollar's eyes flashed strangely indeed. He became suddenly very uneasy in his chair. He brushed his hand briskly across his forehead, and to and fro over the bald spot on his crown. It was as plain to Duncan as need be, that a more unwelcome visitor than himself, at that hour, could not have made his appearance.

"I conclude," began the young man, rather leisurely than otherwise, "that you still recollect something I had

to say to you, when I was here last, about the little property my mother left?"

"No, I don't," quite shortly returned his uncle. "I remember nothing at all about it."

"You do not recollect, then, telling me at that time, that you were perfectly ignorant of my mother's leaving any property, of any value?"

Staring hard at him, as if he would demand by what authority he came in there to interrogate and cross-question him, he answered still more crustily, "Recollect nothing at all about it. Why should I?"

And thereupon he again rubbed, first his forehead, then the bald patch, and finally adjusted his cravat with much uneasiness.

"And recollect nothing," pursued Duncan, "of my speaking of your having had the whole care of it?"

"No, sir,"—very short indeed.

"That's strange," mused the young man, half aloud, throwing his eyes up at the wall.

"Yes; strange things happen very often, sir," observed his uncle.

"Very well; then nothing is left me but to set this down as one of them," returned he, with resoluteness. "It is a matter that will admit of no dispute whatever, that I did speak to you—and when I was last here, too,—of my mother's estate!"

Thereupon, Mr. Dollar, intending no doubt to impress him more properly with a just sense of his own presence and dignity, bestowed upon him still another look, more frowning and severe than before; as if he were hesitating the least bit in the world about getting angry outright.

Said he, at length, "Do you mean to come here to charge me with—with—"

"No, sir; no, sir; not at all. I charge you with

nothing; and I wish to charge you with nothing. I only mean to say, however, and I do hereby say to you, that you appear to have a very defective memory! That is all, sir!"

"Is that all, indeed? And let me tell you that that is a good deal more than I usually allow any one to come in here to tell me! A good deal more, sir! Do you get my meaning?"

"I hardly think there's much danger of my mistaking it," answered Duncan. "It would certainly be nobody's fault but my own, if I failed to do so."

"But, in Heaven's name," burst forth Mr. Dollar, "what has all this stuff to do with me? What are you talking about? What are you here for? I guess you've mistaken the office!"

"At least," said his nephew, as deferentially as he could, under all the circumstances, "if I have got into the wrong office, I am sure of having found the right individual! The person whom I have come here expressly to see is Mr. Jacob Dollar; my own uncle, too; and no other person in the world."

Something it was in the tone of Duncan, whether the ease or the resoluteness, or both so well combined, that entangled the feelings of Mr. Dollar still more inextricably in the mesh of perplexity, and he seemed about to lose his patience altogether.

"Your uncle!" repeated he, sneeringly, catching up a newspaper, and as suddenly throwing it down again.

"I can not deny the relationship, as I see," said Duncan, "even if that might be supposed to be my wish, sir. The fact stands out just as it is."

"Yes, I know," said his uncle, speaking half compassionately of the dead, "I know I happened to be the brother of your poor mother. I grant, too, that she went and

threw herself away in marrying as she did. But I could n't help that. It's a thing I can't help now, either. That's all passed and gone forever.—Poor girl!”

“You never need have any fears,” proudly, and rather defiantly, replied Duncan, “that either her maiden name, or her still living relatives, will be brought into disgrace by any of the fruits of her marriage. That happens to be a something, very fortunately, sir, beyond your control.”

“Um!” answered Mr. Dollar, nettled terribly; and he fell to stroking his chin.

“But I wish to say more of my mother. It is what I have come here expressly for.”

“All you please—all you please. Without any doubt she was one of the very best of women.”

“You speak truly; she was, indeed. None knew her who did not love her. She was a general favorite every where. But by none was she more beloved, sir, than by her own children. I don't know as it's necessary that I should say even that, especially in the presence of her brother.”

“Oh, it's all natural enough,” returned Mr. Dollar, affecting a wonderful degree of careless ease in his manner. “It's just as it should be. I'm sure, I'm glad to hear it is so. Such intelligence is calculated to make any brother feel perfectly satisfied.”

“Yes,” pursued Duncan, keeping to his purpose perseveringly; “and it is because I happened to love this dear mother of mine so much that I have come to the determination to do justice to her memory in every particular. She died, as you may well know, leaving two children; my sister Alice, and myself.”

“Well, no; I did n't know that,” answered his uncle, as if, even after knowing it, he cared still less about it.

"Alice, poor girl! has been deaf and dumb from infancy. Since I was able I have supported her myself; it has been, I fear, but a sorry kind of support some of the time; but it was the best I could do, especially without the least assistance from relatives whose help would have been worth something."

"That's all perfectly right," said Mr. Dollar. "I like the looks of that, I'm sure."

"After having searched through the whole matter as thoroughly as possible," persevered the nephew, "I discover, to a positive certainty, that my mother left property enough of her own in your care to make my poor sister comfortable for life. I want to know what there is to be said and done further about it; and I have come to the conclusion, too, that the matter ought not to lie in this state any longer. This is exactly the object of my visit to-night."

"In my hands! Your—mother—left—prop-er-ty—in—my—hands!" exclaimed his uncle, drawing every word.

"Yes, sir," promptly replied Duncan; "in your hands. That I am perfectly persuaded of."

"What's given you that idea, I'd like to know?" demanded Mr. Dollar, quite briskly.

"I will tell you, sir: in the first place, it was what she told me herself; in the next place, she has so stated it in her will."

"Her will! Did she make a will? What had she got to bequeath, in Heaven's name?"

"She did make a will," returned the nephew; "and in that instrument she saw fit to make a disposition of her property. Of course she would not have done so unless there was something to be disposed of. As I said, sir, that will is one proof of her having deposited what little she

once possessed, in your hands; and I carry that proof about with me. I have it now."

"Won't you let me see it?" asked his uncle, reaching out his hand.

"I should prefer not to, sir, just now," resolutely refused the nephew. "I am not here to prove or disprove any thing. What I want to know is, simply whether you are willing to make suitable return soon of the trust confided in you. If so, then I will come at some other time, and the matter shall be brought to a close in due form. Of course, the property has improved considerably in your hands?"

His uncle was thoroughly aroused now, for he seemed to see the danger of his mean duplicity staring him full in the face. "What nonsense," exclaimed he, "to make a will when there's nothing to leave! It's just of a piece with half the things women do. The fact is, they never knew any thing about business, and they never will. However," he added, as if breaking away from the thought that fettered him, "it does n't make a great deal of difference, I guess, whether she made a will or not. It's nothing more than so much blank paper, any how."

"You will find," returned Duncan, with his usual spirit, "that it does make all the difference in the world. In the first place, it certainly goes to show that she had property to leave, and that she was perfectly aware of it, besides. This will was made by her on her dying bed; and of course its statements are to be received as of vastly more weight and importance than ordinary ones would naturally carry with them. In the next place, it makes a great deal of difference to me whether my only sister—deaf and dumb, too—is made comfortable for life by it, or goes without what, by every rule of justice, fairly belongs to her. There's where the matter rests. You see that much, Mr. Dollar, don't you?"

"I don't see what all this has to do with me, sir," said his uncle.

"It has this to do with you, then : that as you received into your hands the little heap of my mother's fortune in trust for her own and her children's benefit, you will be looked to now for the full surrender of all that you received—every dollar !"

His uncle looked at him steadily a moment with mingled astonishment and anger.

"This is loud talk, young man," said he, lowering his voice ; "very loud talk ! Do you know it ?"

"When I set myself about an affair of business, Mr. Dollar," said Duncan, "I never mean to be put aside by any of the little obstacles that come up in my path. I intend to finish what I begin, always ; especially a business of the highly important character that this possesses. As you must see yourself, at a single glance, this is certainly a matter of the first interest to me ; and not less to me than to my dear sister, and the memory of my dead mother ; and still further, to your own self, Mr. Dollar !"

"Well, but I don't see that. I don't see what I've got to do with it, any way ; or why I should take any sort of interest in it."

"Oh, well," said Duncan ; "if you don't, then it must needs be explained to you. You shall not certainly be made to suffer through ignorance. This matter interests you, then," he went on, "because just so surely as you refuse to give up and restore what was placed, almost sacredly, in your management, you will be made to give it up ! I speak openly to you, Mr. Dollar, and without the least idea of reserve. I mean just what I say, and nothing less. It is enough for me that at this very moment I understand the matter through and through. No further explanations are needed by me, either one

way or the other. I am ready and waiting to go forward just as soon as you betray unwillingness to return what never was your own, and what must have assisted you in the first place in the accumulation of all you now possess. My purpose is fixed!"

"Young man," said Mr. Jacob Dollar, his eyes flashing and his face burning with rage, while he was almost insufferably impatient of the restraint thus placed upon him by his penniless nephew—"young man, you very evidently do not know who you are talking to, or what you are talking about! It is my advice that you go home and consider upon this matter a little longer. There is such a thing as being mistaken, though you may not have thought of it. And there's such another thing as being in too great a hurry about a matter. You'll find, if you take my advice and think it all over coolly, that you have fallen into both errors. Just go back home again, and resolve to yourself that for the future you'll be more cautious!"

Duncan rose slowly from his seat. He stood up at his full height, and with a proud and resolute mien. His lips were pale, but their lines were marked with all the firmness of fixed determination. His brow was clouded, yet across it fell no shade of perplexity. His bright eyes flashed a fire from their very depths, that would of itself have scorched and withered the soul of any other than such a being as Jacob Dollar without a single syllable from his lips.

"Then at last, and for the last time," said the nephew, "I understand you. What you now say is final? You deny, once for all, any participation in this mean and dishonest transaction? You refuse to restore what I am ready to show you have taken? Is that it?"

"You do understand me, sir," answered his uncle.

"And now the sooner you leave this room the more comfortably you will be likely to get down the stairs! You understand that, I suppose, too?"

"Well then," rejoined Duncan, "I simply wish you to remember that the proofs of your iniquity, which I carry continually about with me, are such as will blast you and your name forever! I shall see to it that they are put to good service instantly! Good-day, sir. We may meet again; and it may be under altogether different circumstances!"

And in a moment he was gone.

As he emerged from the door below stairs and wended his way along up the street, the shadows already beginning to gather in the angles of the buildings on either side—had he been curious enough to glance behind him but for an instant, he would have caught the outline of a mysterious-looking person following at a little distance after him.

And more than this even—could he have been near enough to listen to the few ominous syllables that fell from the lips of that mysterious figure, he would have heard the strange words sounding sepulchral in his ears—"That 's the feller, eh? I guess I sh'll know him ag'in, though!"

The person was Isaac Crankey; and this espionage he had been set upon just at that time by the watchful Henry Dollar, who happened to catch sight of his cousin on his way to his father's office.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DOUBLE SECRET.

ONLY a few minutes had he been gone from the office of Mr. Dollar, when the latter, who had become quite uneasy with nothing but the companionship of his reflections, jumped up from his chair, and went down stairs at a rapid rate.

He was angry—that could not be denied. The flush of hot blood in his cheeks betrayed it if nothing else had.

And his quick step, and the nervousness of his whole manner made the proof complete. Hurrying along up the street, he had hardly gone the distance of half a block when he overtook Isaac Crankey.

“Just the one I wanted to see!” exclaimed Mr. Dollar, passing him and turning round as if a sudden thought had occurred to him. “Just the very man!”

“Always at your service, sir,” returned Isaac, tipping his greasy visor with a knowing look in the other’s face.

“Go right back to my office!” said Mr. Dollar. “Go right back! I want you!”

The man turned half round preparatory to obeying the order.

“No one’s round here in partic’ler, is there? Nobody sees us, think you?” continued the man of money.

“I can’t see as there does; I guess it’s all right,” answered Isaac, turning his quid in his mouth, while his

eyes sparkled with fresh intelligence. "No danger as I can see."

"Then go ahead, Crankey!" said Mr. Dollar. "I'll be there right after you. Run on! I must see you to-night."

And Isaac turned now fully around, and hurried off to the place whither he had been directed.

When Mr. Dollar joined him again in the office, up stairs he had taken the precaution to shut and secure the lower door. After that he felt that he need have no dread of interruption.

"Now we are alone," said he to Isaac, as he took his seat again in his office-chair. "Now I can say just exactly what I want to say without any fears of being overheard."

Isaac smiled, for he could feel his fee already.

"Crankey," said Mr. Dollar, in a bland and highly conciliatory voice, "you've done a good many useful little jobs for me, in your way!"

"Wal—yes; I b'lieve I have," returned Isaac, carelessly rubbing his head; "an' I guess you'll say I've invariably done 'em well, too."

"No cause for complaint," said Mr. Dollar. "Not the first cause for complaint. And I have paid you well for them, have n't I? Always paid you well for them? Never disputed your price—nor any thing of that kind?"

"Alwuz paid me like a man, Mr. Dollar. I don't complain. I never did complain. I only wish there was more like you!"

"Well, well—that's enough. That's all I wanted to know. We're square, then. All our old accounts are settled, are n't they?"

"I b'lieve they be," answered Isaac, who in his heart of avarice would eagerly have seized upon the lightest pretext for the establishment of a new claim.

To one who did not thoroughly know Mr. Dollar, with all his strange peculiarities, such a conversation as this of his with a degraded being like Isaac Crankey, would have been an anomaly past explanation or unravelment. To his own sense of what became him, judging as he must have done, from a stand-point that he very well understood, it was quite within the legitimate limits of his business operations; and of his character none the less.

"What I called you in here for this time," said he, seeking to give him a timely taste of the feast in preparation, "is to offer you a little something more! No objection, have ye?"

"Aha! My palm's been itchin' these many days!" answered the ruffian. "It's been wantin' to be covered!"

"Then I know you're ready for what I'm going to ask you to do. It's really very fortunate; I could n't well do without you—I'll say that much; and if this thing was allowed to run many days I might n't feel quite so much like doing it; and then again, you see, it would most likely be too late. You understand, I conclude?"

"I guess I do. Nothin' like strikin' while the iron's hot, Mr. Dollar—is ther'? It's jest what I always say to my friends; an' I ruther guess I've got lot's of 'em."

Mr. Dollar's face suddenly flushed again. The recollection of what had so lately passed between him and his young nephew rushed rapidly over his brain, and fierce anger took control of his heart.

"Did you pass a young man just now?" asked he, lowering his voice nearly to a whisper.

"Pass a man? Yes—no! Yes I did; leastways, he passed me, I guess. How was he dressed? Do you remember?"

And making a vigorous effort to recall every thing, while he was likewise wondering in secret if he could

mean the same individual that he had just been set to watch by his own son Henry, he cast his eyes down upon the floor.

"He wore a hat," answered the merchant, thoughtfully; "and a frock-coat of a brown color. I did n't notice the remainder of his dress, in particular."

"Whiskers?" asked Isaac, in a single word.

"Yes, whiskers. All the way round his face they were."

"Ah, I see him then," returned Isaac, squirting a plentiful stream of tobacco juice into the dark and dirty little grate.

"First let me tell you his name, and who he is," said Mr. Dollar, "so that you won't fail to know him when you see him again. It's Morrow; Duncan is his given name. He's a sort of a clerk or a bookkeeper, or a what-not or other, in a merchant-house in the city. They employ him, I've heard. And that's all I know about that."

"Exactly," chimed in the man of violence.

"Now, to come right to it at once," added Mr. Dollar, "here is the point, and here's the pinch;—"

"That's what I'm lookin' for, ye see;" interrupted Isaac.

"—This young fellow is a nuisance to me! He gets in my way! I can't keep him out of it! Only a few minutes ago, he left the very seat you're in now; and in that seat he had been threatening me with the most wicked and unheard-of treatment!"

"He!" sneered the other, as well he might have sneered from knowing something of Mr. Dollar's wealth, and of his opponent's poverty. "Why in the world sh'd you be afraid o' him? Why, he han't got no power by the side o' such as you, Mr. Dollar!"

"Perhaps he has n't; and then, perhaps he's got much more than I know any thing about. At all events," and

Mr. Dollar braced himself with an enraged gesture in his chair, "I mean that he shall never walk into this place to threaten me again!"

"No more would I let him do it myself," answered Isaac. "In fact I'm pretty sure I should n't!"

"The trouble he makes me," went on the merchant, dropping his voice again, "is just in this way: he's got a paper about him, that he told me himself he always carried about him; and that paper must be taken out of his pocket! In other words, Crankey, here's a viper, and you can see his fangs; those fangs must be pulled out; when that's done, he's as harmless as any body! Do you think you get my meaning now?"

"Ho! ho!" laughed the other, screwing and twisting his body about, as if he had enjoyed nothing so highly in a long time; "that's a good figger, Mr. Dollar! Blamed if 'tan't! You ain't never very hard to understand in my way o' thinkin'!"

"Very well, then. Now the next thing I want to know is—"

Crankey settled his chin soberly on his breast, understanding very well what was coming.

"—If you are with me in such a kind of business?"

And Mr. Dollar eyed his companion with a fierce sort of anxiety, as if with that single searching glance he would look him through and through.

"How do ye generally find me, Mr. Dollar?" returned he, looking up pleasantly in his face.

"Oh, as for that, I've no fault to find; no fault whatever. I've told you so before, you know."

"An' I've got no fault to find with you, neither. Won't ye please to go on, Mr. Dollar?"

"Well then, in few words," said he, "I would like to have you obtain possession of this paper. If you can

manage to take every thing you'll find in his pockets, you can't very well miss this. How you will see fit to do it, is not for me to inquire. Yet I should think you could manage it pretty easily; take him some evening—he goes out, I understand; or find your way to his room when he's asleep; or almost any way you might think best. All I want, you know, is that single paper! It's going to be the means of making me a great deal of mischief unless I can get it into my hands at once, and destroy it! Suppose I leave this whole matter to your skillful management? What do you say?"

Isaac had been thinking. His mind was pulling at two strings. One of them had been placed in his hand by young Henry Dollar, and now the other was just furnished by his equally criminal father. The ruffian could not help turning over at the moment the old adage that has something to say about "killing two birds with one stone."

"I say yes, Mr. Dollar," he answered, raising his head and firing another stream into the dull little grate.

"That's right!" exclaimed the merchant, rubbing his hands in ill-concealed glee. "Now I know just where to find you!"

"As you always may," interrupted Isaac.

"Then you engage to undertake this business for me, do you?"

"Certain, Mr. Dollar; but still I'd order say it depends a trifle on the price, you know;" and as if to turn off the edge of his suggestion somewhat, he half laughed in the merchant's face.

"Well then," resumed Mr. Dollar, settling in his chair, for his feelings were made a little easier now, "I'll be perfectly fair with you, and I'll say that you shall do this delicate piece of business for me at your own price! How do you like that? It's fair, is n't it?"

"Certain, certain it is; and it's jest like nobody but Mr. Dollar, too!" he returned, employing such flattery as came to him. "But you see," said he, "it costs one a good deal o' trouble, and a good deal more money besides, to keep a secret, an' such a secret as this too! It's really expensive, Mr. Dollar, every way!"

"Oh, well, I shan't grudge you a dollar of it, not a single dollar. As soon's your work's all done, you'll have your money. I shall calculate to pay it down promptly into your own hand; and no questions asked, either."

"That suits me, I'm sure," said Isaac.

"Then you are fully agreed on it?" asked Mr. Dollar once more, as if still in some vague doubt.

"Yis, I am," was the prompt reply.

"Here's something, then, to bind the bargain," and he handed over to him a piece of gold which the villain seized with an eager grasp. "Now the sooner you go about your work the better!"

"Ill see if I can't do it this very night, Mr. Dollar," he returned, in a whisper that sounded fiendish in that darkened little apartment.

His expression, if one could have noted it, was suddenly and strangely changed, betokening the entire supremacy of the evil one over his hardened heart. Rising immediately therefore, from his seat, he moved thoughtfully, but with firmness, to the door.

"You are sure you know your man?" said Mr. Dollar, as the ruffian went out.

"I guess I do!" he answered quickly. "An' what's more, I happen to know a spot where he passes a good many nights in a week, to see some young woman of his acquaintance! I guess I can tell him, ever so fur off! I've got my man in my eye, sir! You jest wait and be patient till you hear from me agin!"

"Slide the bolts back on the lower door, Crankey," said Mr. Dollar, as the man went down stairs.

And after he was gone, and the room was quite still, and the merchant saw that so foul and so wicked a deed had been determined on beyond recall, he began to pace to and fro across the floor, hands in his pockets, and his eyes cast downward in thought. He felt now that he had taken a step, that it was not in his power to retrace. His conscience moved him a little; but he thrust his hat on his head, and exclaiming aloud to himself, "The fool! he's brought it all on himself!" passed finally out, and locked his doors. And the old rooms were as silent as if no deed of darkness and violence had but just now been plotted there, between one who styled himself a "respectable" merchant, and a villainous captain of robbers and thieves.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BOOK PEDDLER.

MR. BRINDALL—the old apple-dealer—came home in the evening later than usual, weary and dusty. He placed his big basket behind the door, and sat down and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. Fetching a deep sigh, as if his heart that night was more troubled than ever, he threw an affectionate glance at his devoted friend—the young seamstress, Fanny—and then fell to the study of the shadows that were creeping and skulking about the angles of the little area out of the window.

“What is the matter to-night, father?” asked Fanny, in a tone that was enough to equalize the most irregular spirits. “Has n’t trade gone well with you? Why do you take such very long breaths?”

“Ah, Fanny, Fanny!” exclaimed he, very slowly and low; “many as your trials are, and many as I myself know them to be, you don’t know any of that bitter, bitter experience that I know! Your lips have never had such a cup held to them as that! Enough to make the stoutest heart sigh, yes, and melt itself away in sighs! Enough to drive reason out of the strongest brain!”

“What is, father? What is?” she inquired, pausing in the middle of the floor. “I don’t know what you mean, exactly. I don’t know what it is that troubles you so very much. If you would but tell me, now, I

think I could give you some little relief. I am pretty good at such things, ain't I? At least you have told me that I am."

"Sympathy is good," said the other; "and your sympathy, dear Fanny, is of the sweetest. Indeed I don't know but I must have given up long ago, had n't it been for what you have done for me. But still," here he became thoughtful and slow in speech again, "there is a something in almost every heart, that no other heart can quite reach."

"Is there in yours, father?"

For a moment he was solemnly silent.

"If you could but ask the stone walls, against which I lift my eyes every hour in the long days, and to which I offer my prayers!"

"Offer prayers to the walls!" she exclaimed, half-wondering if he were quite in his right mind.

"They are as soft as the hearts of men," he answered. "I find more companionship in them. They offer me more sympathy. Their silence, even, is more welcome to me than the silence of men; for they give me back no hard or scowling looks; they have no such heartless faces; they are mute, and I am mute; and so all the day we keep companionship. Except that now and then I throw my eyes up into the heavens, and wonder if all is to be lived over again up there! I can't help wondering!"

It was now the girl's time to become thoughtful; and seating herself near him, she alternately was led captive of her astonishment, and the incoherent talk of her friend.

"If a man never is to get up in the world," said he, as if he were thinking aloud, rather than talking to be heard by another, "if there never'll come a change, never a turn in the long lane, never a lift in the clouds, nor a

clearing away of the night, why, what's the use in trying to go on? Life's worth nothing at all! It's worth less than nothing! Better end it at once, than to grovel along so! Better try that which we know to be so uncertain, than to creep on one's hands and knees through the remainder of life, and under chains, too! Oh, why is it so? Why is it so? Who is it that says society shall be framed in this way, with all these iron bands and barriers? Who is it that is strong enough to say that the world shall build itself up on the ruins of a few unfortunate ones; and that those few shall never, never rise? Who has the right to make these tyrant prejudices, that shut men out of hope—out of all sympathy from the rest? that snaps off the link of dear brotherhood, and declares that it shall never in this life be joined on again? Oh, Heaven! to be an outcast!—to wear the mark of Cain!—to bend, and bend, and stagger so unsteadily under the weight of a burden that every body delights to make as heavy as he can!—to look wistfully into human faces, and find not the first mark of a blessed humanity there!—to feel about one for human hearts and be repaid with gifts of stone and ice! Who can live and bear up under such things? Who would want to, when the escape is so easy?—the mere prick of a pin?—the stopping of the breath! What is life worth on such hard terms?—without the riches of the sympathy of your own kind?—without any bright spot to set off the dizzy—dizzy darkness?"

He paused a moment.

"But you have my sympathy," ventured Fanny, hardly daring to intrude on a grief that seemed so overwhelming. "Is not that something, small as it is, father?"

"Oh, God bless your dear heart, my little one!" he exclaimed. "So I have! So I have! But it kills me to think that it is what I can never repay! That if I could

but find an echo in other hearts, I could instantly make your own dear heart overflow with joy!"

"And why can you not?" she asked him, in perfect childishness and innocence.

"Don't seek to know any further," he answered. "It's my doom, and I must bear it! The chain that is fastened to me, I must clank along with me every step to the grave! If there is only a hope that after that I shall be free!—only a single faint hope!"

The poor girl, perplexed beyond expression, would gladly have probed the trouble to its very heart; but being already too well assured from his manner that it was what on no terms he was disposed to permit, ceased further inquiry, and let out to him in thoughtful silence the whole flow—rich, and strong, and full—of her sympathies.

"I've pretty much determined," he presently began again, changing his subject somewhat, "to try a new kind of business—for the summer, at least; something that will give me greater variety, and more air, and new acquaintance. I've grown tired of standing so in one place all day, and looking into people's faces to no purpose; and I believe it makes me more unhappy, and hate the world more than ever, to see that out of so many great currents of human life, so very few have even a light thought for me. I've thought the matter over with myself these several weeks; and now my mind is about made up. I hate to go away from you, Fanny, for I feel that you're the only friend I've got in the world; but I hope the time won't be long before we shall be together again. I will exert myself so much the more to hasten the day; and meantime I shall write you."

Fanny could not have been more surprised, although, on reflection, she applauded sincerely the motive that induced him to enter on his new undertaking. She gave

utterance to many exclamations, and asked many questions. Of course she was deeply interested to know what his new business was to be.

"Traveling," said he; "traveling all the time! I'm going to walk away from the world, by walking through the world. I'm going to find new faces, dear Fanny; perhaps some of them will have a soft look for me, or a pleasant smile. I'm going to enter all home-roofs, and look right into the hearts of families; to see what others have to endure as well as myself, and how they can be happy in spite of it all!"

She thought that such an employment as this would be exceedingly welcome as a change, to a heart in the diseased condition of his; yet she could not quite understand how so novel an occupation—if such it might be termed—was to furnish him with the means of livelihood. So she timidly put more questions.

"I'll tell you the whole of it, Fanny," said he, as if he were about to impart her some great secret: "I've got rid of my stock in trade, and let out my stall at the street-corner to another person—all for the cash in hand. To-morrow—yes, just as soon as I can go about it—I'm to buy a basket-full of as popular books as I can find, and strike right off with them into the country! I shall keep traveling till I sell them; and then replenish my stock. There's my plan, Fanny! Now tell me how you like it."

She hesitated. Well she might; for this was nothing less than a proposal to quit her society altogether, and launch himself once more alone upon the world. Yet she was far from certain that this was not the best thing left for him. She could not help feeling that she was unable to cope with so terrible and so stealthy a disease as seemed to have got hold of his heart; and, even at a sacrifice to

herself, was trying to become perfectly willing to consent to the separation.

"What do you think of it, Fanny?" he asked her a second time. "You don't tell me."

"If it will make you any happier than you are here," she answered, thoughtfully, "I shall want you to go. Do you think it will?"

"Yes, yes; oh, yes, Fanny. Any thing, rather than this agony all the day long. Any thing, so that I may perhaps find faces that will have looks of sympathy for me! I can not live so, long. I must either go about something new or give up altogether! I must—I must, Fanny! I see how it is! I can see it all plain enough for myself!"

He expressed himself with such passionate fervor that the girl was quite alarmed. Indeed, in the brief space of time taken up with this quick reply, her mind had imperceptibly given up its secret protests and its lingering doubts, and she at once assented to his plan with all earnestness. It was plain that he must have a change, and that soon, or the consequences might be even beyond what she dared dream of.

So on the morrow he began his walks about town to the several bookstores at which he had determined to lay in his supplies; and making such selections as he thought would avail him most and soonest, packed them away snugly in his basket—the same in which he had carried his fruit before them—and returned to Fanny to assort and arrange his little stores over again.

The poor girl's eyes opened the wider as they ran over the gilded backs and inviting titles; and throwing aside her work, and diving in eagerly among the leaves, she appeared to have suddenly become a creature of another world. The old man sat and watched her with indescribable interest.

"If every body else is only as much taken up with my books as you are," said he, "I sha' n't be afraid of going to the poor-house very soon!"

All things being duly got in readiness, the several volumes of the basket-library having been arranged and re-arranged for at least the fiftieth time, and always with the closest eye to effect, the peddler took young Fanny's hand in his, evidently prepared to make her a long speech on taking his leave; but when he saw her eyes trying to look through the films of their tears into his face, his throat swelled, his articulation choked, and he could only press her hand affectionately, and utter, in a half whisper, hoarse and low—"God bless you, dear Fanny! Don't forget me, will you?"

She answered not. She could not speak. And while she gazed silently after him, he was gone. Such was their leave-taking; an occasion on which each had resolved to talk by the half-hour to the other, whereas only one, and he with difficulty, could utter a word.

First of all, he wended his way to a railway station; and purchasing a cheap ticket for a distant village, took his seat in the car denominated the "second-class;" albeit there is no kind of question that first-class people may often ride in them—and was shortly wheeling across the country at a rate that but a little while ago would have been deemed fabulous.

In the same car with him were a couple of Irish families, just arrived, who were on their swift way to some dim and unlocated western home—just across the prairies, or just over the mountains; three laboring men, two of whom were trying to answer the questions of the third as fast as he put them; and a poor woman, alone. The peddler had his thoughts as well as those in the higher-priced cars behind him; and while he sat on the hard bench,

leaning his arm over the back of the seat, and gazing at the flying objects out of the window, his mind went back—back—back; the old time slipped forward to his eyes, with its freshness and hope; the troubles were gone; the trials, the temptations, the whole;—he was living in the golden mist that early memory—the memory of the boy—was weaving.

By the middle of the afternoon he was set down at his place of destination; and hardly had he put foot upon the long platform, and turned about to look closer at the swift train that brought him there, when every thing—cars, engine, people, and all—was a dark speck scarcely to be distinguished in the distance. Half dizzy with the suddenness of the change, he took up his basket and moved along slowly through the village.

For the rest of that day he had much more good fortune than he had dared to expect. At the first place at which he called he sold nothing, it is true; but then he felt quite as well as if he had, from seeing the eagerness with which they crowded around his peripatetic library, and fell to an examination of his several books. At the next he disposed of one volume; and he was as much gratified, perhaps, as disappointed, in knowing that if he had happened to bring certain other books he could readily have disposed of two more. He slept in the village that night, and early in the morning took his way over a country road into the inner domains of rural life.

His walk took him across rough and little-traveled highways, and down narrow and grassy lanes; and past little clusters of manufactories, settled down in shaded valleys, and spacious and pretentious farm-houses, lording it over broad acres of grass and corn. Wherever outside appearances seemed to invite him, he went in; setting forth the quantity and character of his works to the lis-

tening inmates in the most intense and glowing language he could command, and frequently calling their attention earnestly to some particular volume, assuring them that it was just such a book as they needed, and should be found lying on every table.

Some of the rustic population were very willing to read his books, and soon became absorbed in them; but as waiting to allow others time to read was hardly turning fair opportunities to his own account, he soon managed to bring such experiments to a crisis; and the manner of his doing it was so much in keeping with the thrifty character of a genuine New England Yankee, that he rarely failed of the object at which he aimed. For the privilege of reading a certain time in any of his books he would propose to exact the corresponding privilege of a little rest for his feet and food for his stomach; or if it chanced that night was coming on, he would offer the same opportunities for reading in return for a lodging and a breakfast in the morning. Where there were families of children, whose thirst for reading was just making itself felt upon the mind with its gnawing sensations—perhaps never through a long life of anxiety and busy care to be entirely satisfied—he found little difficulty in compassing his design; and the result was, that the further he got into the great country, the better he found his condition, both pecuniary and physical.

His spirits were slowly undergoing a beneficial change. He could feel that they were. He had none of that old fear that brooded continually upon him like a nightmare. His step grew lighter and lighter the further he walked. A conviction possessed him that he had turned his back forever on all that was distressful to his feelings, and that he need not any longer walk in doubt. His eyes did not now all the time seek the ground. They studied the

silent landscapes through which he went, and dreamed in the blue deeps of the rounded sky; and sought out beauty wherever it dwelt—in its homes by winding streams, or in little crypts of darkling valleys, or across rolling plains in the mazes of vast woods. He labored to throw off the whole memory of his former life, and strove, as few men can strive, to look forward to the future. He struggled valiantly to break through the mesh of his olden thoughts, hoping to find a something his heart most needed in the experience of the new.

And thus day after day went by with him, each one bringing brighter skies than its predecessor. He traveled on through village after village, and town after town, always selling something, and making his labor profitable. Hope was in his heart now—and that was something.

One evening he reached Draggledew Plain. The little hamlet burst upon his sight almost without warning. It was just at the going down of the sun, and exactly at the hour when he was wondering if he should find a good spot in which to quarter for the night. There was the old tavern, with its swinging sign supported by tall posts before the door. There was Hector Hedge himself, the landlord, his shirt sleeves rolled up, and his hands braced against the sides of the door above his head. And there stood the pleasant little church, its spire pointing silently above the elms to the heavens, penciled with the delicacy of fancy against the glowing sky of evening.

Walking up to the tavern-door, he found that he could readily obtain lodgings there, although Hector Hedge was a man that was satisfied with no slight or superficial survey of the customers he honored with his service. Did they want books there? he, or his wife, or his children? That made old Hedge smile. Books? what were books good for but to throw away a man's money

on, and give to the mice that liked the paste in their bindings? His children had their school-books; what need of more? He was sure they used them up fast enough; faster than he could afford to pay for them!

But the peddler was persevering. Children are not to be curbed with nothing but a tyrannic command. Before the evening was well through he had completed a contract with the still resisting landlord, by the terms of which one half the charge was to be deducted from his board-bill, on condition that the children be permitted to read all they wanted! This—thought Hector—was at least cheaper than paying money out of pocket for books that would be flung aside as useless in the end. Mr. Hedge is not alone, by any means, in his way of thinking.

Early the next morning the traveler began his rounds through the village; and having completed them with as little success as he could have feared, started off bravely again for the open roads and the broad country.

The very first house he came to happened to be that of Mr. Holliday. The honest housekeeper's eyes glistened at sight of his baskets of books, and she regretted over and over again that Mr. Holliday was not at home; "He's a great hand for books," said she, "and writes 'em himself, too! You'd sell some to him, sir, I know you would!"

Could she tell where he had gone? No, she could n't exactly; but it was out to walk somewhere. "Mebbe you'll meet him along on the road, sir! He went over that way," waving her hand.

He walked and walked on. The sun was high in the heavens, and it was sultry. Climbing toilingly up the hill, the delightful residence of Mr. Rivers met his vision. He could hardly help pausing to admire the pretty picture it offered him. Placed among the trees and shrubbery it looked more like some little rustic arbor than a

house for people to live in, and only as such a picture it seemed to possess his mind.

As he came up the road and studied the peculiarities of the place more closely, he discovered that upon the piazzâ were sitting a couple of young ladies with a gentleman companion. The latter was Mr. Holliday. First he hesitated; then he halted; then he started on; and finally stopped again. But observing that they had been quick witnesses of his vacillating conduct, he determined to destroy all unfavorable impressions that they might have formed, by opening the little wicket and going straight up to them. With a respectful bow, therefore, he held out his basket, and asked them if they would like to look at what he had to sell.

"Oh, books, Mary!" exclaimed Martha, making as if to take them all into her lap at once. "New books! What a treat!"

Mary was looking them over, and so was Mr. Holliday.

"And I declare!" again exclaimed the fully awakened Martha, "if here isn't a volume I happen to own myself! Well done, Mary! Just look here!"

"What is it you've got? Let's see if it's worth making such a fuss over," answered her sister.

The other held it up so that she could read the title on the back. "Marrymust Bridge!" said she; and glanced at Mr. Holliday, and blushed.

"That's quite a popular book," suggested the peddler. "I have sold quite a number of them since I started."

The girls smiled, and Mr. Holliday said "Um!" and smiled too.

"I don't think we shall want any more copies of that," said Mr. Holliday, turning over the assortment with the hand of one who knew the way to what he wanted; "but here are two or three others that I think I might as well

have. I've been waiting for them till I could go to town myself; but as long as they are here, right at the door, I'd as lief have them now as to wait." And the eyes of the young author went searchingly through the pages of the volumes he fished up from the depths of the basket.

Martha's sympathetic eye discovered that the poor man was tired, and that his heart, through his face, told a sad and long tale of anxiety. She asked him if he would not sit down; to which invitation he responded by taking a seat upon the step of the piazza. Then thoughtfully inquiring if he would like some cool and fresh water, she hurried to draw a pitcher full from the pump on the back porch.

The traveler took off his straw hat, and seemed to enjoy with a keen relish the cool air of the place. His mind was on his business chiefly, however, and he gazed into the handsome faces of the girls while he talked and talked away in behalf of his books. Mr. Holliday bought three and paid him for them. As much to encourage him as with any other design, each of the sisters purchased a volume, and sat a few moments running them over.

All had been gathered properly into the basket once more, and the traveling merchant was making ready to depart; he was, in fact, right in the act of thanking his friends for their kind patronage, when a step was heard across the floor, and Mr. Rivers made his appearance.

The stranger rose to his feet as with a bound. The eyes of the two met. Their looks were fixed and deeply searching. Mr. Rivers stopped in the middle of the floor, neither did the other for a moment move from his tracks. By degrees the rest looked up and saw what was the state of things, and in their turn were silent with astonishment.

"Great Heaven!" was the low ejaculation that seemed pressed out of the stranger's heart.

Still no syllable passed Mr. Rivers's lips, and still the others spake not. But the eyes of the former were fastened upon the face of the intruder with an expression that combined both curiosity and sympathy. It was not a harsh look; it rather suggested deep compassion, yet a compassion wonderfully threaded and perplexed with doubt.

Only for a minute or two did the stranger remain in his position, and then turned away muttering undistinguishable syllables, and looking as if in dumb supplication upward to the sky. He walked down the path again, and immediately disappeared on the country road. As soon as he was out of sight, the sisters instinctively turned to their father, to seek explanation of such strange conduct; but instead of having their curiosity gratified, their wonder only became the greater by the discovery that their father had suddenly moved off into the house.

All three looked at each other inquiringly, each one involved in the same perplexity; but they asked no questions. They were silent, and silently they nursed their wonder.

And off over the still and lonely roads went the book-merchant again, the old cloud hanging over him darker than ever, and the old shadow still flocking up his path. He walked he knew not how fast. It was no matter to him now whither he went; he had as lief turn back to the close city as to push on through the open country. He felt that he was branded with a curse. He thought there could no where be escape to him from his doom. He was almost tempted to fold his arms, and await now the very worst that could come, without an effort to escape from any thing.

The girls sought to learn of their father, after Mr. Holliday had gone, what it was that caused such a marked change in the man's demeanor, satisfied that he could tell them all they wished to know. But he received their inquiries with a shake of the head, merely saying :

"It's nothing that you need know, my daughters. It's all gone by now. I won't rake it over again. The man has apparently suffered enough already ! I pity him ! Let him go !"

CHAPTER XXXI.

A LOVER'S KNOT.

THEY had been running about the grounds of Mr. Rivers's little elysium—Martha and Mr. Holliday—plucking here and there a flower or two that was still left in blossom, and weaving them into a wreath with the myrtle leaves that grew luxuriantly beneath a sober spruce-tree, suffering the current of their conversation to run whither their feelings or fancies led them along. It was a pleasant afternoon in the late summer, full of the slowly ripening glories of the season. In the brilliant sky burned the most gorgeous colors that the summer had by the alchemy of its furnace produced. In the air slept a calm and half sensuous feeling of delight, that brooded on the stilled spirits so quietly that it was as if they never had known, and never would know the suffering of unrest. The glory filled the heart as it filled the sky.

By slow and circuitous routes they reached at length the entrance of a little rustic temple, that had been erected late in the spring, and over which a pair of climbing roses had ever since been laboring ambitiously to throw a light cloak of flowers and leaves. Woodbines that had likewise been set out at the foot of each of the posts at the entrance, were slowly shadowing the lattice, and dotting the wooden seats with the many versiformed figures and patches that the sun sifted through their

exuberant foliage. They were talking of books and authors; and expressing their preferences for such of both as betrayed the broad and deep love for nature, which alone gave the true tone of healthiness and delight.

Martha was a sketcher from nature herself. She looked at landscapes with an artist's, and therefore with a lover's, eye. And as she received such a secret pleasure from their reproduction with the pencil, she affirmed that she hardly enjoyed them less when painted with the artful skill of description. A book with a thread of nature winding through its attractive pages, like a brook dancing down a meadow-land, showed soul, and sympathy, and reach of power that lay not altogether upon the surface. With such, and with such only, she enjoyed a close and extended companionship.

And in this kind of talk, suffering the calm moments to slip by, their sympathies mutually enkindling to a more noticeable extent than ever before, Martha stepped within the little arbor without a thought, and sat down upon the bench.

"How delightful it is here!" she exclaimed, gazing out through the leafy screen. "In one summer more, now, this shade will be much denser; and then we shall have an out-door palace indeed! Won't you come into my reception-room, Mr. Holliday? Really, you don't know what beautiful tints I get here! They are almost as softly toned as if they came through high windows, all arched and stained!"

The young man, who stood at the entrance looking in, questioned himself to know if this could be more than a pictured dream. In the ballooning of his fancies during sleep, he could just dimly and duskily remember that he had been admitted to glancing visions of which this one seemed a copy. His thoughts, as they ran nimbly back

throwing their flowery girdle about his experiences, could just place before him again some sweet picture, that had almost faded already, but now lived and mingled its sunny rays in with the more somber hues of his existence.

It was a dreamy vision, and peculiarly beautiful. What with the full foliaged boughs overhead, that shed broad shadows down through the pagoda-like roof of the little arbor, and the closer-growing green of the vines that embraced it on all sides as in love—a shade was produced within, in the softened light of which the face and figure of the young girl became almost ethereal. She did not seem altogether of flesh and blood, nor yet altogether angelic; yet like a vision—part reality, and part a delicious illusion—she seemed swimming in the airy and evanescent atmosphere of her own radiance, charming and herself charmed. And to fix this momentary impression, and to make it, for ever so swift a moment, an outstanding reality, around which nevertheless still floated the cloud-gauziness of a chastened summer afternoon ecstasy—the light dawned meltingly through the lattice-work over her radiant face, toning itself down exactly to that point at which it might create a beautiful fancy, yet admit a reality of life.

Mr. Holliday crossed the threshold, and sat down on the same bench that she occupied. Placing his hat beside him, he suffered the tremulous waves of air to rill across his forehead, while his heart confessed to a sense of being purely refreshed. Martha continued dallying with the little wreath of myrtle and flowers, resetting the latter, and now and then arranging the leaves over again.

“I wonder Mary does n’t enjoy coming here as much as I do,” said she, for the first time sensible of being slightly embarrassed by her new situation.

"Your tastes are unlike," suggested her companion. "I could hardly find those that were more so, especially about natural objects of beauty."

"And yet," put in Martha in extenuation, "Mary has changed very much since we first came from town out here. What was at first not endurable at all she now manages to get along with quite tolerably. Indeed, I have hopes of her!"

"What should make such a difference?" he asked. "You were both born in the city, and have been accustomed to nothing but city modes of life till now."

"But even before we moved here," interrupted she, "I remember very well that I had longings—oh, such indescribable longings, sometimes!"

"For the country? For such a life as this—so calm and so placid through all the seasons?"

"Yes, yes—for nature; for beauty! I craved a sympathy that feels its way out from beneath the surface of things! I know that nature is dumb; but she has language for such of her children as can listen with child-like souls. I can not help feeling pity for the ignorance in which they who affect a feeling above the inanimate world are willing to grope and grovel. How little they still know, and only because they will not lift their heads above these fogs of our artificial life!"

"Fogs indeed!" returned her companion. "But I think I see abundant signs of a healthy change in the feelings of your sister, myself. The truth is, one can not always successfully resist these mute appeals of our common mother. They are not mute, either. They are full of the most glorious eloquence—of the most stirring pathos. They move us deeper than to mere smiles or tears. If a person is still unacquainted with the heart of nature, his life is yet to be begun. He has not so much

as learned the alphabet by which he is to know his own emotions. But let me tell you, Miss Martha," he continued, perhaps changing his tone as she slightly changed her color, "that it was this very same universal love for what I have ever loved so truly myself that particularly interested me in you. I thought from the first that I had found in your heart a deep well of sympathy. Since then my early convictions have controlled me."

Martha's eyes ceased to wander away through the diamonded lattice, but fell slowly to the flower-wreath she held in her hands.

The hour was so quiet, and the spirit of the hour so genial, and the rich impulse of the young man's heart went bounding along so pleasantly to his brain, making the moment one of such complete happiness—that, without forethought, and before he could discipline his quivering lips to the syllables that were crowding to their threshold for expression, he spoke to the one who sat next him as he had never, never spoken before to living soul.

"I have long hungered for the sympathy that I hope I have at last found in you," he said. "My life has been more or less lonely, and is so still. Few hearts there were that beat to extend me any of their wealth; and till I saw you I felt alone. But your face kindled an emotion that never controlled me before. I knew I could read in it the secret of all the mysteries my heart had ever known. It dissolved the barriers I had raised about me at once. I lived on, and hope grew. The feeling you had excited seemed to renovate my whole nature—to make me a new creature. I could not say that the germ of it was not within me before, waiting for an atmosphere in which it might grow; but never, never had I felt the power of the feeling till then. I tried to outroot it, thinking I might

unconsciously be misled of it. I tried to persuade myself that it was nothing more than a momentary influence that would pass away as my heart sobered itself. I sought solitude; but that made the matter worse. I plunged deeper into study, and labored to correct what I feared might be nothing but an error leading me astray. But I could not labor as I once did. My thoughts did not seem at all to be my own thoughts. Nothing that I once possessed—time, inclination, emotions—nothing was any longer my own.”

Now Martha was busily picking the little green wreath in her lap to pieces. Her face was strangely flushed, and its expression surpassingly sweet and beautiful. But not a word passed her lips. In eloquent silence she sat there in the rustic temple in the garden, and listened to this earnest and burning confession of her companion.

“Many and many a time,” he continued, “have I determined to tell you all that so filled my heart; and as many times have I buried the secret, with a strong effort, down in my own bosom again. But it would not stay buried there. It has sought to control me, and it has controlled me. It masters me even now. I can not keep it from you longer; I should be dealing untruly not less with yourself than with my own nature, did I seek to conceal what will not be concealed. If you will not turn a deaf ear yet to me—if you will consent to feed ever so little the sympathy that is consuming my soul, unfed—oh, if you will but receive the sincerest profession my heart ever, ever made—believe that I love you truly—believe that my soul has imperceptibly been knit to yours, till it now yearns to it as to its own living mate! Tell me if only any part of this feeling of mine finds an answer in your heart! Give me hope—only a faint hope—that you will in even a small degree receive the pro-

fessions I have made with the feeling in which they are made! And, dear Martha"—she had suffered him gently to take one of her hands between both his own—"may I ask to hear from your own lips such syllables as will encourage me my whole life through! Tell me if I can occupy that place in your heart that you do in mine! Let me be assured this very day of my happiness, if such happiness is in store for me! Martha, shall you utterly refuse me? Shall I be sent away empty? Will you give me just one word—one single word of encouragement—that the sun may shine as brightly for me as it has not shone since my earliest childhood?—that the world may look as fair as it can look only to those whose souls are brimming with hope?—that my future life may have its heaven tinted with the glowing colors of love, rather than shaded with the clouds of disappointment and desolate solitude? Will you encourage me, dear Martha, with one little word? May I dare hope that you ever can, ever will offer me your love in return?"

He was silent a moment, and but for a moment. Martha Rivers was a girl of too excellent sense and of a much too highly cultivated heart to allow herself to treat such professions insincerely, or to trifle in the least with the feelings of which they were begotten. Gathering courage, therefore—while the beautiful color in her cheeks and over her forehead deepened perceptibly—she threw her eyes out of the opposite lattice, and answered him:

"I will be frank with you, Mr. Holliday. I can not be otherwise if I would. The preference you have this moment expressed for me, I do not think it conceit in me at all to say, I have observed for a considerable time. It could not readily have escaped me. And the sympathy you crave—yes, yes, you have it; you *do* have it."

"Do I have more?—more than sympathy? Do I

merit such a gift as your love?" he asked rapidly, still holding her hand in his own. "Will you tell me that, before I go away from this spot? Will you even make this place sacred in my eyes forever, by the confession I am dying to hear your lips speak? Will you? Will you, dear Martha?"

She was going to say more, but she felt that her lips faltered and trembled. She had not the command of them that was hers but a moment ago. All she could whisper to his quick questions was summed up in the few syllables—"I will! Yes, I do!"

Enough for lover as earnest as young Mr. Holliday. His eyes gazed rapturously on her speaking face, as if he could scarcely realize what he saw. His pulses throbbed with a quick and stirring impetuosity. A thrilling sensation shot through all his veins, as he tried to feel, and to be conscious of the feeling, that he was supremely happy. But if he were abundantly assured of the truth that for the first time in his life now dawned on him, the conviction was a something too subtle for analysis, and only bright enough for a blissful dream. In the unspeakable emotions of the moment his soul reveled without hinderance. Nothing but light flooded his sky. Nothing but golden colors lengthened and spread away in the boundless azure of his future. Could mortal ask for more?

When they finally left that charming retreat, thus made memorable to both through a whole lifetime, their spirits were calm to an extent that neither had ever known. The sun shone more bright in the heavens. The air was bland as the enchantment of a dream. Every sight, every odor, every sound, carried a secret delight to their senses. They were walking circuitously again toward the house; but they walked, in their fancies, through paths that wound round among banks of

ever-blooming flowers, and that skirted lakes upon whose silver surfaces the exuberant foliage threw down only golden shadows. If heaven ever lives here for the briefest moment in poor human hearts, it surely took now entire possession of theirs. Oh, the indiscrible and never-repeated bliss that broods in the lap of the first love. Never again in the checkered after-life may it return, for never then are the feelings fresh with the dew of hope, and never more does the exulting heart so bound forward over the long reaches of an experience that is then all, all unknown!

They came to the end of a little walk, and encountered the paling. As they were about to turn again, a voice from the other side saluted them, causing them both to start rather suddenly from their quiescent enjoyment.

"Well done!" said the voice, with an articulation whose rapidity alone might have betrayed its possessor. "How dee do? Got back again, ye see! Pleasant! Beautiful day, ain't it?"

They looked only to behold Mr. Dandelly! He had just taken off his white castor, and was industriously engaged in fanning his bed of sweltering curls, with a handkerchief whose perfumes might have been stolen from Araby the Blest. The same strange genius—the same untiring, indefatigable, never-dismayed character, that clung to an acquaintance to the end of his days; good for all places, and warranted to last through all time!

"At least," thought Arthur, "I'll brush him off!" and offering Martha his arm, they turned quite abruptly down another path, leaving the poor creature alone with his lengthened ringlets, and his lengthening reflections.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

SOON after tea the same evening, which was prepared at an early hour in Mr. Rivers's household during these long and weary summer days, Martha happened to be sitting again on the piazza-bench, alone. Mary was engaged about something interesting chiefly to herself, and therefore sought the additional retirement of her own apartment.

The flush of the new happiness still lay over the spirits of Martha, and betrayed itself sufficiently in the expression of her face. She was sitting there thus quietly, trying to lay against her heart the full meaning of the words that had but that afternoon been spoken, and to feel in some proper degree the depth and breadth of the reality that had now resulted. But clearly to separate the actuality from those pleasanter and more delightful emotions that would go dancing through her nature; to measure by a thought, so critical that it could analyze and separate, while it still enjoyed, the boundless delight that had unexpectedly been begotten of that day; to divorce her feelings of indescribable pleasure from the bright tints that colored them all, and bring them down to a hard and dry realization, this was what she could not do, for it was more than any human heart in like circumstances ever confessed to itself that it has accomplished.

The garden, she thought, never looked more beautifully to her than now; nor the walks, the trees, the foliage, the sky. She saw beauties where—cultivated as was the sense of beauty within her—she had not seen them before. All the world wore the same rosy and radiant colorings that were given it of her own impassioned heart. There was nothing like an excitement, either, upon her; on the contrary, a sweet peace brooded over her feelings, out of which more joy flowed than ever gushed from the waters of a swift and turbulent ecstasy. It was joy, but not partial joy. It was a perfect joy, full and complete. And as it welled up constantly till her heart was running over, so it lent its own peculiar lights to the very landscape over which her eyes went roaming. It seemed, rather than to excite her, to lay a calm hand upon her head and compose her with its blessing.

In the midst of the delicious reverie of the evening hour, she caught an approaching footstep across the hall, which she knew to be her father's. He stood in the door a moment, and spoke carelessly of the appearance of the sky in the west, prophesying a bright day for the morrow. Then slowly approaching her, he asked if she were alone; and receiving her answer, took her hand within his arm, after his old-time manner of affection, and began a thoughtful walk up and down the garden paths.

For a while his talk to her was only of general matters; such as any father might easily be supposed to indulge in with his daughter, in a stroll through a garden full of objects of interest to them both. He had many comments to make on the flowers; their thrift, and their future promise. He offered a variety of observations on the general plan of things, suggesting a list of alterations and improvements against another season; and at last turned his eyes in the direction of the little arbor, and

spoke of the climbing vines there, that were so full of shadowy assurances for the summers just before them.

Martha's eyes were fixed upon the arbor, too; and her heart beat more briskly against her boddice, as she regarded it, and her breath came shorter.

He led her gently along, until they reached the entrance. She threw in a glance; the interior seemed to her never to look so beautiful. She was going all through with her rich afternoon experience again. But just as she expected to take the next step forward, and pass the leaf-frilled entrance, what should her father do but stop altogether, and take her hand in his own. Her face was deeply suffused with color.

"My daughter," said he, in a low voice that thrilled her every nerve, "I have been wanting to speak with you about a matter that chiefly concerns yourself, for several days. Let us go in here, where we can be alone, and I will begin upon it. Come!"

And before she could have protested or resisted, had such been her disposition, he had conducted her to the bench, and seated himself close by her side.

"I will come to it at once," said he. "It's about Mr. Holliday."

She felt as if her face was burning up. So soon upon the scene that had before been enacted in that same place!

"He spoke with me about you, several days since," continued her father, "professing an ardent and honorable attachment. I had some considerable conversation with him on the subject, in the course of which I determined to understand thoroughly what his professions might really mean—what they were made of. I questioned him freely; and I must say that to all my inquiries he answered with perfect candor and a true gentleman's

frankness. He freely confessed his deep affection, and besought my permission to offer you such attentions as might be mutually congenial to you both. And I at once gave it to him. I could do no less to a person for whom I have ever entertained such high respect. Have you ever observed any partiality for you on his part, Martha?"

She confessed that she had.

"A decided partiality?" he persisted. "So striking as to put your mind in a new train of thought?"

Yes, she was obliged to admit that, too. It was not the time now for concealment. Every thing depended on open dealing with one another.

"Well, well," said he, "he had my assent—he had it freely. Now, Martha, I want you to tell me plainly if you are pleased with his attentions, especially when they aspire to a character that all partialities do not. I wish you would frankly give up to me one secret of your heart; not to be used for any purpose that can in the most remote manner interfere with your happiness, but simply to place me, as well as yourself, on such a footing with him as may be proper in the premises. You will understand exactly what I mean. I know your own good sense will commend my inquiry and the motive that prompted it. Do you like Mr. Holliday, my daughter?"

There was but one answer to such a question as that, of course; and she could not be supposed to burden it with a great many qualifications.

"Of his preference—nay, of his passion, I myself am very well persuaded," he went on. "I think I have detected it long since in a variety of little matters. It was quite unmistakable. If you find that your heart secretly repays this feeling of his, and if, furthermore, you are

satisfied that his nature and disposition—to say nothing of his prospects—are such as are reasonably suited to your own, why—why—” and then ensued a pause that Martha would gladly have furnished him with a quarto dictionary to fill up.

“Why,” pursued he, after seeming to turn it over and over in his mind, “then you certainly can have no objection to—to—to—” and here came another pause, quite as awful as before.

“But for all that I seem to hold him in such estimation, Martha,” he added, not troubling himself at all to complete his last two fragmentary sentences—“I wish I could learn more about his history, from his youth up; for in the first place, he interests me deeply, and always has since the day he rescued you from the awful death that threatened you—”

Martha instinctively shuddered at the mere recollection of that runaway ride.

“And in the second place, there appears to be some sort of a mystery folded up in his life that a tender sympathy could not fail to unravel. My curiosity is a little piqued as well as my sympathy; and I confess it: but it is only to you, my daughter.”

Martha had herself at times been moved by the same or similar feelings, although they had been kept entirely to herself. “Still,” replied she to her father’s remarks, “little as we may know of him, or rather of his early history, he has certainly commended himself to our respect, if not to our affection, since we first knew him.”

“Certainly he has. I dispute nothing of that kind. I was only seeking to gratify certain feelings that influence me at times. Yet if they should n’t happen to be gratified at all—why, I suppose it would make no such great difference in the end.”

"Perhaps he will narrate what there is to be told in good time," suggested Martha.

"Well, let us hope so. I can wait in patience, I think; especially if you can, my daughter."

They exchanged smiles.

"Of course you hold a high opinion of him as an author?" her father remarked. "You look upon him as a man of much promise, do you not?"

"Have you read his last book yourself, father? and his first one too, for that matter?" she asked, regarding him with a look not a little related to pride.

"Yes, I have; and I must say that I liked it. I liked its tone. It was a healthy one throughout. You know I don't call myself much of a critic, of course; but then that does n't hinder my knowledge of my own feelings, as I can see. And I thought, furthermore, from the reading of his volume, that he was a young man of whom a great deal may be expected; not any the less, to be sure, because he is now quite unknown, and because he lives for the time in this seclusion. You can't tell how soon some persons will flower out."

"No one could expect that such a person should be very generally appreciated in a locality like this, you know, father; all pretty enough and pleasant enough as a rural district; but not peopled by those who are particularly qualified to judge in matters of intellectual attainments."

"I know that very well. But while I do know it, I can see enough of Mr. Holliday's good sense and accurate calculation in settling in such a place, till he has got a foothold in his profession, to make me respect him all the more."

"Yes, but I do not think it is altogether from mere motives of prudence or economy that he remains here in

his present retirement. That is something, of course; but it is n't all."

"What then?" asked he, scarcely thinking of any other considerations that could induce him to lead such a life.

"Why, his deep and ardent love for nature," answered Martha, showing by her tone that she fully appreciated the feeling of the young author herself.

"Ah! that indeed!" said Mr. Rivers. "Love of nature? Yes, that's a great deal."

"It is with some beings," answered Martha; "and with him not less than myself. We both agree exactly in that matter."

"Do you? Then so much the better! Then so much the more reason for hoping that your dispositions are altogether alike, and will finally coalesce entirely. From my own feelings on that point I know very well that it is a strong bond to hold congenial natures together. If this love for nature is a leading element in the soul of Mr. Holliday, Martha—"

"It is, it is, father."

"Then he is already ennobled and refined far above what mere social life can do for him; and there is little or no more need of questionings about his character. That is passport enough. It proves him pure, and generous, and good. But have you ever thought what sort of a wife you might make for an author, my daughter? Think you, you can fill such a place not only with satisfaction to your husband, but with happiness to yourself?"

She blushed before she answered.

"If our tastes are at all alike, as they are," said she, thoughtfully, "perhaps such a relation might be a happy one."

"So indeed it would," replied her father. "Only find sympathies that feed your own sympathies, and the union

is sure to promise every thing that could be desired. I am free to say that I like Mr. Holliday, and always have; and he has had my consent to pay such attentions to you as may be agreeable. Now I am going to leave you alone here to think about it as long as you will."

He arose to depart.

"Oh, father," called she, desirous perhaps of changing the subject a little. "Arthur and I were talking the other day about something that I promised him I would ask you to explain."

"What is that, my daughter? I am willing to enlighten you all I can."

"Will you surely, then, on this subject?"

"Well, well; first tell me what it is, and I will give you my answer afterward. That's the business way, you know."

"It is about that book-peddler that came here a few days ago. As soon as he saw you he muttered something, turned deathly pale, and went away. You would n't tell me what it meant at the time, you know—"

"Then I'm certain I can not do so now. Oh, no; that's nothing. That's all gone by now, and must n't be spoken of. It was something you would n't understand, even if I should tell you; and if you did, why no good would be done by my telling. No, no; let that matter drop. Don't ask me about it again. It's blown over, and never will be likely to be heard of again."

And with these few words he slipped out of the little vine-clad arbor, and pursued his way to the house.

For nearly an hour the enraptured heart of the girl held her in that delightful seclusion. She sat alone and dreamed it all over again, stretching her dreams far forward into the future. The event of that afternoon she had not yet had the courage to communicate to her father,

although a better opportunity never could present itself than the one she had just suffered to pass unimproved. Yet she looked forward to the full revelation of her secret in good time, when her heart told her that others beside herself would gladly welcome her lover with the open arms of affection and relationship.

And there in the rustic temple she dreamed, and dreamed on.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A MUTE MONITOR.

ON the inauspicious evening of Mr. Jacob Dollar's secret conference with his brother in crime, he retired very soon after supper to the privacy of his own apartment.

At a time like this, crowded so full with the speculations of his guilty thoughts, and alive with the torturing suggestions of a soul in which murder itself held its court, his manner could not fail to be agitated to a remarkable degree. He was in no wise himself on this evening. That coolness which he ordinarily wore about him like a garment, and by the help of which he well knew how to chill and repel all undesirable approaches, was not upon him now. The usual audacity had left the expression of his countenance. That look of biting cynicism was gone. His nerves had lost a great part of their energy, too, as nothing but his faltering and unsteady step across the floor—to and fro, to and fro—would testify. He carried his hands unsteadily, and without purpose; swinging them carelessly about him, tucking them under the skirts of his coat, thrusting them into his pockets, or passing them hastily through his hair.

What energy he did display was fitful and irresponsible. It was not his own. It betrayed only an occasional return of his true reason, and of course, therefore, the general supremacy of chaos among his feelings and thoughts.

Already the mysterious change had come over him, against which, under like circumstances, no living man can hope to make provision. He had dared to touch the pitch, and he could not help being defiled. The sacred oath of nature that bound him to innocence, he had recklessly violated; and now there was no peace for him, let him turn whichever way he would. An echo startled him. A mere shadow aroused him like an accusing spirit. The hasty beating of his heart, as he paused a moment to listen, sounded like the roll of the drum of fate.

His face was flushed, but not altogether with wine. Something beneath this it was that caused such an unusual betrayal of excited feeling. He could not drive it from his thoughts, that he had recently had ominous business—business of violence and wrong—with Isaac Crankey, the monster whose hands shrank not from the stains of innocent blood! He was not able to expel the dreadful reflection from his mind, that at that very hour, it might be, a fellow creature was suffering through his own cruel instrumentality! He could begin to feel the truth that others have felt poignantly before him,

“’Tis conscience that makes cowards of us all.”

An indefinable, and therefore a more dreadful fear, cast its dark, dull shadow over his heart; the fear lest what he had projected should not result exactly as he wished; lest some trifling accident that no human sense could have foreseen and averted, might have come in between him and his object, and might yet send back the guilt with a terrible recoil upon his own soul. Under the morbid influence of such a fear, therefore, he was carried to a pitch of excitement nearly related to insanity itself.

As soon as he sat down, every noise that reached him at all suddenly from the street, started him half out of

his chair. The sounds of the coming and going footsteps on the pavements he caught with indescribable eagerness, lest some of them might be the footsteps of an unwelcome messenger. Every unexpected blast of wind upon the blinds; every creaking of a bough in the yard against the window below; every doleful moan of a distant swinging sign, struck a secret terror to his heart, as if his very life might in a moment freeze and die within him.

His eyes, at these times in such paroxysms of fear, seemed quite deprived of their power of vision. Monsters, now and then, dire and dread, mingling themselves in shapeless masses, clutching and clawing at each other over his head, kept him in a state of continual trembling. He knew that he felt hot and sickening breaths, emitted from the mouths of creatures that had no existence save in his own diseased brain, streaming forth upon him, over his face, in long, unbroken lines; and unconsciously he turned away his head in disgust, and gasped for air that was free from the contamination of creatures so indescribable.

Suddenly his eyes grew bleared, and looked really bloodshot; so that he could but indistinctly observe objects just across the room. Every thing seemed to swim before him, or to grow strangely colored and distorted. He actually thrust out his hands, as if he would know whether the images that moved in his brain were realities in the focus of his diseased vision.

The room was fearfully still. A tomb, it seemed, could hardly be more so. One could have heard distinctly the slight scratch of a nail, or the merest creak of a board. It was not a natural silence at all; it seemed ominous and awful. It was begotten of some influence that must have been close of kin to death. Apparently it was the brooding of some revolting terror over the man—over the heart—over the entire apartment.

And what was the cause of all this secret distress to the heart of the man of money? Why fetched he such deep, deep breaths, like one whose lungs are stifling for want of air, and who feels himself sinking down—down to a depth from which he can never rise again? Were not all his plans now perfect? Had he omitted or overlooked one single trifling link in the iron chain he had been forging? Was there any loop-hole still left, out through which he feared mischief and final ruin might creep slyly on his wishes, overthrowing himself at the same moment with them? Would not now his most eager desire reach its realization—the desire of obtaining, even although by monstrous violence, the paper that recorded irresistible proof of his black-heartedness and treachery?

The door-bell rung. It was a hasty and alarming ring.

He started up as if he had heard the quick report of a pistol. Every tinkle—tinkle—tinkle of the bell resounded sharply in his ears. The multiplied echoes rang and kept ringing through the whole house. His heart beat alarmingly faster, yet he could not tell why. The blood flushed his face, and then as quickly left him pale as a statue. He clutched the arms of his chair, and sat bolt upright, staring every where about him.

There was something more that started his fears. He caught a sound like the shuffling of feet in the hall below. And next he heard a tramp; the steady tread of feet, tramp—tramp.

Now he sprang to his feet. ●

He could hear a shriek below—short and piercing. Confused screams and cries from female voices reached him, and his blood curdled with fear. And above all other sounds came the quick voice of men—calling, and ordering, and advising.

His heart was already in his mouth. He could neither speak nor move. There he was standing in the middle of the floor, frozen to the spot to which his nerveless limbs held him, and gazing around him in resistless agitation and blank dismay. Something had happened, he knew; but what?

Now there were feet to be heard on the stairs approaching. Each moment they came up—up, and nearer—nearer. Now they were at the landing. Now at the very door of his apartment.

He heard an abrupt and thundering knock; and before he could have had time to answer, the door was hastily opened. A loud cry of distress—a deep subdued moan that came from the heart of a sufferer—was all he heard. A maid-servant stood before him, wringing her hands and almost choking with her great grief.

“Wh—what is the matter?”

It was all he could do to gasp it out.

“Oh, sir! Oh, sir!” cried the girl, at length; “come down stairs and see! Only come yourself and see the dreadful—dreadful sight!”—and again she fell to weeping more bitterly than before.

“Who—where am I? What is it? Who has come? Tell me, girl!” he shouted, seizing her frenziedly by the arm.

“Down stairs, sir! Down stairs!” she cried. “Oh, cruel—cruel thing! Oh, sir—only go down stairs and see it for yourself!”

So unsatisfactory an answer, which was quite all the affrighted creature could give him, fired him with an energy he never knew before. Yet with the energy came a dreadful fear that was sickening and deathly.

“Merciful Heavens!” he exclaimed. “What does all this mean! In my own house, too! What can it mean!”

and he rushed madly past the girl, and hurried out through the door.

Down the hall stairs he pursued his headlong way—his brain whirling and his eyes swimming, thinking not of himself or his own safety—and drove onward till he came up with a dark knot of men gathered in a door at the further end of the hall. As he reached them one of them caught hold of his arm to keep him back.

“Who is it?” he demanded, gazing insanely into the faces of them all. “What does this mean? I demand of you to tell me! What are you doing here? Am I in my own house? Do I know what I am about? Isn’t this Jacob Dollar? Do I see these men here before me? What are you here for? What is it? Let go of me! Let me go in! Stand back, I say—all of you! Make room for me! What does all this mean?”

As he finished speaking thus passionately he made a fearful effort to pass on, bracing his arms stoutly against those who stood in his way. He appeared to possess the strength of a madman. In another moment he had forced himself into the room, when he strode across the floor to the spot about which the others were gathered.

Already the room was dark with the crowd of people. They swayed and pushed this way and that, every face betraying the deep and solemn feeling that ruled their hearts. The voices of all were low, and surcharged with a heavy sadness. They bewildered the man of wealth still the more, and made his terror the greater and more appalling.

He worked a passage to the center of the group. There was a table there, and across the table lay stretched a body! He started with a cry as his eyes first fell on it.

Looking down nearer he saw the pale face of the

corpse. Closer—closer still, and he got a view of all its lineaments. He saw all! He knew all! It was the body of his only son and child!

So sudden and overwhelming was the shock, that for a moment he was struck dumb. He vented his anguish in one single groan; and that was all. Claspings his hands together, and straining his wild gaze upon his child, he seemed not to breathe, but to have yielded at last altogether to the distracting powers that beset his soul.

"Murdered!" whispered a voice that sounded in his ear like a loud hiss. "See here!"—and a man put away the streaming locks of hair, and laid bare the ugly wound across the pallid temple.

"Murdered!" suddenly seemed to echo itself in yells—in screeches—in loud and direful cries in his ears, till the voices echoed like the wails and sobs of a great tempest. "Murdered! Murdered!" He thought he had known that word before. Those dread syllables seemed not quite unfamiliar to him. They revived strange phantoms that had dimly peopled his brain for many days. They gave him, as it were, a half scent of blood, so that he grew sick, and faint, and trembling. Oh, what a word—what a fearful word was that!

The young man lay rigid in the arms of death. His head had been thoughtfully adjusted so that his countenance wore its familiar expression, and his hands were fixed stiff and motionless at his side. Those around the table were viewing him with pitying eyes, lamenting the fatal blow that robbed a fellow-being so cruelly of his life.

The lips exuded a white froth, showing that his death was hard, and came only after the severest struggles with nature. The eyes were wholly closed. The hair, that had become considerably matted, was brushed carefully away from the forehead now, revealing the broad mark of

blood that was drawn across his left temple, and staining the skin till it presented a horrid spectacle. At that place the skull had been broken in. That was where the assassin's bludgeon fell. Through this aperture the soul had gone out again to its Maker.

The father at length comprehended it all, and then broke forth in a wail of agony that was uncontrollable :

"Oh, my boy! my boy! my own dear boy! This great wickedness! this cruel, cruel wrong Oh, this wicked murder! Who has done it! Who has robbed me of my own child—my only child? Oh, who has done it? Henry, my child!"—he took hold of his cold hand, and slowly lifted it up from his side—"speak to me only once more! Only once, dear Henry! Speak again to me! Oh, do speak! Oh, God! what has come on me to-day! What a wicked wretch! Oh, what a crime is this! If I had never lived to see it! If I had died before you, my dear son! Speak, Henry! Speak! Oh, my wicked, wicked soul!—my wretched heart!—my bloody hands!" and he held them up before his eyes. "God forgive me! God only forgive me!"

He continued to bend over to the face of his dead son, uttering such wild ejaculations as these, until, in consequence of some sudden and inexplicable revulsion of feeling, he turned like an insane man, rushed out of the room, and ran up stairs into the apartment he had just left, securing the door after him.

Then pacing the floor frantically to and fro, he began to bewail the terrible calamity that had fallen on him. The vivid recollection, too, of the murderer's project he had himself so lately planned with his confederate, Isaac Crankey, now flashed over his guilty soul, and made his torment harrowing beyond description. He saw how his own wicked scheme had miscarried. He saw how fear-

fully it had been made to recoil upon himself; how bitter, how very bitter, was the draught, when the chalice was held for his own lips to drain!

And laying his head at last upon the table, and burying his face in his hands, he wept aloud.

Poor, guilty, crime-overtaken man Tears were all the relief his soul could at such a time enjoy. He might well thank God for even them.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ACCUSER AND ACCUSED.

THE funeral solemnities were hardly over, when the real nature of Mr. Dollar began to exhibit itself in a way that few of his friends or acquaintance would have suspected. As if possessed of a spirit of revenge that would better have belonged to a fiend, he immediately set himself about the work of exacting blood for the blood that had already been shed. It was not enough that the law had taken this mysterious matter into its own hands; he would go beyond the law; its operations were too slow for a spirit so maddened as his; he would go as far as he who went farthest, in ferreting out and bringing to condign punishment the perpetrator of a crime so revolting. It was true that all this would not restore his son to him again; it would never bring back that presence, that look, those familiar words, never so dear to him as now; but revenge would be so sweet to a nature like his, and would drive away more harrowing memories in the wild excitement of its pursuit.

"I have money, enough of it," said he. "It shall every dollar melt from my hands rather than the gallows shall go cheated of its victim! I will spend all I am worth before I will suffer the cold-blooded murderer of my child to go unpunished!"

And night and day he labored perseveringly at his resolution. He pried into minute circumstances, that had

transpired immediately before the homicide, with a zeal that even the secret police might have taken pattern after. He searched through the most trifling bits and shreds of fact, to see if he could find nothing to fix and hold fast his suspicions. He built up imaginary theories, and made them at times so exceedingly plausible, that he wondered with himself if he had not really hit at last upon the key to the whole nefarious mystery. Upon this single subject he was little better than a monomaniac.

Throughout the whole of his excitement, his mind had fastened itself upon one person, whom he believed, or wished to believe, the author of this crime. All his thoughts were actively engaged in creating and collecting proofs—no matter how fine-spun they might be—to inmesh that person in the fatal web of his accusation. His earnest desire of fastening guilt upon him far outran his ability to collect satisfactory evidence upon which to base his charge. Yet he did not hesitate or falter. His crazed thoughts gave him no rest, day or night. They would be at some work continually; and no work was more congenial than this. He raved openly about the violent death of his son, assuring every one who was willing to listen to him, that the murderer should not, and could not escape. People only thought him earnestly anxious to bring a criminal to deserved punishment; but in fact the sole object of his pursuit was—revenge.

As a matter of course, energetic inquiries were immediately set on foot in all quarters of the town, for ferretting out and bringing to speedy justice the author of a deed so diabolical. Here stood a young man on the threshold of life, as it were, with a heart jubilant in the prospect outstretched before him, and filled with the impulses begotten of bright hopes and generous feelings. This was what people said.

And this young man had been suddenly, and without any warning, sent out of the world; hurried, driven into the presence of his Maker. He loved life, it was probable, as well as others. His enjoyments might have been quite as perfect and satisfactory. He had relations whom he loved, and who without doubt loved him tenderly in return. Then how cruel the blow that deprived him unexpectedly of life! How black indeed the villain's heart who laid in wait to deal the deadly stroke with his weapon.

Alas, alas! such poor, weak, superficial judges of the human heart are we, after all! Little knew, and little thought those who thus reasoned and felt with themselves, that his heart was filled with nothing but plots of murder and wrong at the very moment of his fearful death! Who could undertake to say that he had met with nothing more than his just retribution!

And while the authorities studied and labored over the dark mystery, the frantic father raved and labored too. At length he felt that he had come so closely upon the heart of the matter, that he openly declared the real murderer could not go loose upon the world another day! Society should not longer be kept in fear by his unchained presence! He was a monster that deserved to live only in the process of a slow death! fit only to be lifted by his neck between the heavens and the earth, for a terrible warning and example! Justice, yes, justice, he said, was all he wanted; and of that no human being should defraud him! He would have it, too, right speedily!

And this half insane man, who goes about with such high-sounding phrases in behalf only of right—who fears so much for the safety of the social system from the temporary freedom of the murderer—who is so willing to spend all the accumulations of laborious years, that one single crime may not go unaccompanied with its proper

reward—this man could himself plan a cold-blooded assault that might result in death; could project the subsequent robbery of an insensible person, and still cry out against another who happened to put the cup to his own lips—"Justice! I will have justice!" Could it be that in the providence of One greater than he, the poison he had mixed for another he had been forced to swallow himself?

One more day passed.

Duncan Morrow sat in his room engaged in reading. It was evening. The leisure he had after the expiration of the day's business he did not allow to go unimproved; and at this particular hour he happened to be thoughtfully studying the pregnant page of Shakspeare. By a somewhat strange coincidence, the play to which he had turned happened to be *Macbeth*. His soul was already deeply wrought upon by the power of the great master, and every feeling and emotion was absorbed in the unfolding of the passions of the beings that lived on the page. He offered a picture of a devoted student giving his soul to the subject before him.

Suddenly he thought he heard footsteps on the stairs as of men coming up. He lifted his eyes from the book and attentively listened.

The men reached the door, and knocked. Rising immediately from his chair, and holding the volume still in his hand, he opened to his visitors. They at once accosted him with hasty and incoherent words; and one of the two asked if his name was Duncan Morrow.

"It is," he answered him.

Thereupon both of the strangers pushed into the room, and closed the door after them.

"It's an unpleasant duty to perform," said the one who had put the question, "but we can't help that. You are arrested on a charge of murder!"

Duncan shrank back aghast. His face suddenly grew pale as death. For an instant he could not speak.

"*Me!* MURDER!" he was able at length to exclaim.

They simply nodded an affirmative. Their silence assured him that they were perfectly serious in the business in which they had come.

Then for the first time the whole of the dread suspicion flashed over him. He seemed now to understand at a glance what all this meant.

"Tell me the whole, then!" he commanded them. "Upon whom is it charged that I have committed this crime?"

"Henry Dollar; your own cousin," was the answer.

"It is enough," returned Duncan, in a tone of unaffected sorrow. "I will go with you willingly. But I wish you to understand me—I am innocent—perfectly innocent!"

The better to quiet their own fears, they proposed to slip a pair of handcuffs on his wrists. He assured them that would be quite unnecessary; yet if they entertained even the most trifling fears for his escape, he would certainly consent to be ironed. And while they were performing the task, they could not but secretly admire the proud bearing that nothing but his own lofty sense of innocence could have begotten. From the studious quiet of his little apartment, therefore, they bore him away to the sterner custody of prison walls, there to await action by the properly constituted authorities.

That was his first night in a felon's cell. He paced the floor for some time after his entrance within the four chill and repulsive walls, and finally seated himself on the little bed spread out upon its iron frame. A light twinkled on a stand in the further corner, making the gloom more oppressive. The four walls, with the low, dungeony ceiling,

made his flesh creep coldly, and almost stifled his breathing.

"Oh, well," said he, in a low voice, "better even so, if one has but the assurance of his innocence!" and he threw himself down prone upon the bunk.

It was long afterward when he went to sleep, with no feeling like oppressiveness at his conscience—with no load on his heart—and with the heavy recollection of no great guilt to drag around with his thoughts wherever they journeyed. He had been troubled, and troubled deeply; yet at no moment had he wanted strength to fortify himself. He reposed on a feeling of security that nothing but complete innocence could have given him.

The next morning he was taken before a magistrate of police, and examined touching the matter of which he was accused. What could exceed his astonishment—even if it did not rise to absolute indignation—to find that Mr. Jacob Dollar himself appeared against him, and was in fact his loudest and most strenuous accuser! Little facts had been carefully collected and collated; minute and seemingly unimportant circumstances were patched and strung together; unworthy suspicions—such as could hardly come from less than a bad man himself—were adroitly glossed over with a semblance of truth and reality; and a chain of isolated incidents and occurrences was so ingenuously linked together—seemingly without a break or so much as a flaw—that Duncan actually started in half alarm on seeing these evidences of crime adduced against him, unable, too, to put against them all any thing more than the simple protestation of his innocence.

This was well as far as it went; but, unfortunately, it fell far short of the weight required to overbalance the plausible evidence of the accusation. So he was remanded by the magistrate to prison, to await his trial before

the appropriate tribunal. And with confusion of face he was conducted back to his cell, his heart bursting with the feelings he was not allowed to express.

Late in the afternoon of the same day his cell-door was opened, and the keeper ushered in a female. Duncan was sitting moodily in the only chair the apartment contained, vainly trying to comprehend and more thoroughly realize his fearful situation.

As the lady entered he gazed earnestly in her face for a moment, and then hastily rose from his seat and offered it to her. Evidently, in that dim and uncertain light, he could not see her distinctly enough to make out who she was.

"Duncan," at once spoke the female, aware that he did not recognize her, "don't you know me?"

He approached nearer, and looked fixedly in her face. Immediately he threw up his clasped hands, and called aloud, "Ellen! Is it you, Ellen? Have you come to accuse me, too?"

"No, Duncan; no. Only be calm a little while. I came to hear from your own lips what all this meant. I *must* know. If you can quiet my fears, oh, Duncan! do so at once! Yet I would know only the truth! Do not deceive *me*! Let me still continue to trust you, even if your hands are stained with another's blood"

As she paused she threw an impressive glance toward the turnkey, which he seemed at once to understand, and withdrew from the apartment.

"Oh, Ellen! Ellen!" groaned the young man. "How your heart must revolt at a scene like this! This monstrous accusation—how it must change all your feelings toward me! Wretch that I am, to be the cause of dragging you down, down into the deep of this infamy!"

"Do not think of that, Duncan. Listen only to the secret whispers of your own conscience. What that tells

you is of far more importance than any sort of consolation I or any one else could ever hope to give."

"I know it, Ellen! I know it!" he returned, with a great deal of passionate feeling.

"Our situation," she continued, "is a peculiar one. I do not come here at this time, Duncan, to accuse you, or to upbraid you with even a single syllable. You ought to know my heart well enough to believe any thing rather than that of me. But the first intelligence of this dreadful matter so startled me that I knew not what to do. Desert you, and when you were only accused—not yet proved guilty—how could I? Where should I go for advice? Whom should I call on to satisfy me any better either of your guilt or your innocence? I was in a state of the most dreadful perplexity and distress!"

"Oh, Ellen! Dear Ellen!"

"Suddenly my course was plainly pointed out to me. I saw it all marked down at a single flash of my thought. I resolved to come immediately to you, and first of all to learn from your own lips the truth or falsehood of this great, great accusation. Now, Duncan, you will tell me the whole. Even if you are covered with guilt, I can not wholly banish you from my heart, if you confess to me the truth. No—no, Duncan, I must only pity you—yes, pity you the more!"

Her eyes were dim with tears, as she finished speaking; and when they fell on the uplifted face of the unhappy young man, she saw that the great drops were likewise chasing each other rapidly down his cheeks. For a little time not a word further was spoken. He took her hand gently in his as they stood there in the middle of the floor, and she bowed her head upon his breast. Their mingled sobs filled the little cell with a sorrow to which its twilight gloom seemed a peculiar adaptation.

"I want your help," at length half groaned and half sobbed the prisoner, "your sympathy! I must have it, Ellen, or I can not live!"

"Only tell me the whole truth about this awful crime," she returned, not lifting her face from his bosom. "Tell me if you did it! Are you guilty, Duncan? Oh, do not keep any thing from me! Let me know all; let me know the very worst!"

"Ellen, dear Ellen," he spoke, his voice suddenly growing calm, "you shall know the truth, and from me, too, I am innocent! I am not guilty of this fearful crime! I know not a syllable of its commission! Do you believe me, Ellen?"

She raised her head slowly, and her dimmed eyes sought his face. On it sat enthroned a look of perfect tranquillity and composure. A sweet light seemed in a moment to have shed itself over all his features, and he stood before her wonderfully changed. His attitude was firm and resolute. His head sat erectly on his shoulders. He wore the mien of one whose inmost soul had furnished the words his lips had just spoken.

"Do I believe you!" she repeated, still gazing with a look of blended joy and anxiety, which it is impossible to describe, into his speaking countenance. "Oh, it is such bliss to me, Duncan, to know you are innocent! Speak that word again!—only once more! It sounds so sweet when it comes from you!"

"As I live," repeated he, "I am innocent! My heart does not accuse me, and it never will!"

Immediately he clasped her almost lifeless form in his arms, and held her there till the passion of this mutual joy had in some degree exhausted itself.

The day ended to them both with all the blessed calm of a Sabbath. Duncan was assured of her undying love,

and she of his perfect innocence. Nothing could strain apart the thrice-knit bond of their affection now.

Before he went to sleep that night, and long enough after Ellen had left him alone again, he sat at a little table that was provided him, and wrote to his sister. He gave her a frank statement of the unfortunate matter, and begged her not to be in the least degree troubled; for he felt no remorse himself, and could feel none, for the simple reason that he was haunted with no consciousness of guilt.

The second day after, the letter was placed in the hands of Alice, while she was sitting in the pleasant shadow before her little door. Mrs. Polly did not happen to see her when the letter was delivered, nor for some time afterward; so the poor girl's emotion was not visible to any one. She ran the letter through, while her heart beat with a fearful tumult. It read as follows—brief, under all the circumstances, yet concise and emphatic:

“IN PRISON.

“MY OWN DEAR SISTER—I hasten to tell you myself of the unexpected occurrences of the past two days, preferring that you should receive your first intelligence from me. Do not give yourself any needless alarm, then, dear Alice, on learning that I have been arrested, and am at this moment confined in prison to await my trial. You will, of course, wonder for what I am arrested. You shall certainly know, though I do not doubt you—who know me so well—will think it the most preposterous affair it is possible to imagine.

“To tell you the truth, dear Alice, I am charged with murder! Do not start, nor shudder, for there is no need of it. I was alarmed at first myself; but my mind is composed now. My conscience fails to accuse me, and that

is enough. But upon whom do you think I am accused of committing this crime? Upon my own cousin—Henry Dollar! He was found dead in the public streets one evening, and as it was known that we were on not at all good terms, I am immediately suspected of his murder! On my examination before a magistrate, who should be there to thrust the charge in my face with an earnestness I could hardly help pitying him for, but Henry Dollar's own father!

“I am entirely at a loss to understand what proofs can be brought, with any degree of success, against me, though I felt at first a little alarmed at the plausible nature of the suspicious circumstances he ingeniously collected and arranged in support of his charge. All these, however, must in the end fall to the ground of themselves. But the malice with which that man seems to pursue me every where, is what people generally know nothing about, and can not understand. It was but a few days since that I went to him, as I then told him, for the last time, and demanded to know if he was ready to settle the estate of our mother upon you, as I before suggested. He utterly refused to do any thing about it, and in fact drove me from his presence in a storm of rage. I can see, I think, a close connection between that event and my present situation. But who would believe now what I might have to say of him? No, dear Alice, I must be dumb, and hope for a release only through the kindness of the Providence I have always trusted!

“But in all this tribulation, I am supported by the continued love of one whose affection I have long labored to deserve, and one whom you would even now delight to call ‘sister.’ Ellen Worthington—for you should at this time know her name—is my soul's surest strength. She believes in my innocence, and I yet live in her love. Oh,

Alice! if you could but know what happiness I am still allowed to enjoy, in feeling the assurance that the purest heart in all the world still believes my own to be innocent of all wrong! This it is that consoles me in the midst of such distressing circumstances!

* * * * *

“Write me as soon as you can, dear sister, and promise me solemnly that you will not sorrow for my present misfortunes, but rather believe that out of them all I shall at last come to a greater victory. My love to good Mrs. Polly; tell her from me there is no need to despair. A better feeling is the one needed now.

“Always your devoted brother,

“DUNCAN MORROW.”

Alice finished reading the letter, and suffered it to fall tremblingly into her lap. “Oh, if he should be found guilty!” her heart silently said to her. And she finally put her bonnet on and walked rapidly away from the cottage.

Passing through the village street, she turned off hastily into the road that conducted to the house of Mr. Rivers, and toiled up the gradual ascent till she reached the spot. The first one she asked to see was Martha. She knew just where to go for sympathy in a time like that.

Martha accosted her in the door, and the poor dumb girl eagerly took her hands and burst into tears. Oh, the tears of those whose tongues can not express their sorrows! What griefs touch the feeling heart more deeply than theirs! Martha’s eyes immediately filled, through nothing but pure sympathy. Alice led her friend to a seat on the piazza-bench, and, drawing the letter from its place against her burning heart, gave it her to read.

Words are hardly sufficient to describe the mingled tumult of feelings with which the intelligence contained in the letter was conveyed to her mind. Alice's own brother charged with a crime so fearful as that of murder! And her own dear friend, Ellen Worthington, betrothed to the one who stood thus accused! It was preposterous—nay, it seemed even impossible.

She hurried away to acquaint her sister Mary with what she had just learned, and both returned to their visitor on the piazza to offer her their silent, though none the less deep, sympathy. Great tears stood in the eyes of the mute, glittering evidences of her inward wretchedness. Martha sat down close beside her, and the afflicted girl instinctively took her hand again, as if it were some secret link binding her to her friend's heart. And in the silence that dwelt all around her she sat and gazed upon the floor, never moving her eyes, and never changing that indescribably sad expression of her countenance.

The sisters were too astonished to say much as yet. The intelligence of this unfortunate connection of their friend Ellen with such an affair, though it was most remote and indirect, struck a sort of dismay to their hearts, and they inwardly wondered what might come next. This was the first time, too, they had ever had reason to suspect so much as an acquaintance between Ellen and the brother of Alice. And now it flashed suddenly over the mind of Martha, the whole of it: this was the cause of Ellen's strange interest in Alice during the first visit they paid the little cottage in her company! Here was the clear explanation of what at the time seemed so mysterious and unusual!

Of course the news of Duncan's arrest for his cousin's murder speedily reached every ear about Draggledew

Plain; and not a single person, old or young, was left out of the great circle that held up its united hands in horror, or attempted its thorough and satisfactory discussion. The excitement there was quite as intense as it was nearer to the real scene of the action itself.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SECRET OUT.

MR. ARTHUR HOLLIDAY sat in the little arbor again with Martha, on one of the most golden days of Autumn. A soft haze draped the landscape, enrobing the distant hills, brilliant with the varied forest dyes, with a beauty that cheated the senses out of the reality, and lulled the thoughts into a rapturous reverie. The fruits all about in the orchard were yellow among the boughs, bending them down nearly to the ground. Only the fall flowers erected their stems and displayed their rich garniture of blossoms along the borders, or in knots about the hearts of the beds ; while leaves, long sere, lay strewn here and there in the paths, and sad-voiced crickets were slowly letting their little clocks run down in the faded and drying grass.

The spirits of the youthful lovers certainly were tinged with the soft coloring of melancholy that belonged to the time, and for a long while they sat within the little arbor both silent and thoughtful. Martha would perhaps have broken this silence frequently enough, but she thought she discovered a look in the countenance of her companion that steadily forbade her.

It was only after quite a long interval, indeed, that he spoke himself. "Martha," said he, and his voice was so sadly solemn that she started at the sound, "my thoughts have troubled me much since the hour of our betrothal!"

"Are you not so happy, then?"

"Oh, not because of that—not for that; but I have a burden to carry about with me that—that—"

"But may I not share it with you? Can not I help you carry the load?"

A pause again.

"Yes, dear Martha," said he, looking in her face with eyes glowing with affection—"yes, you shall share it with me, if you will. But I accuse myself because I have not told you all this before. Perhaps"—and he hesitated a little—"you may not feel toward me just as you do now when you come to hear the whole of the history I have to relate."

"Arthur! what can you mean? Do you think I am one to—"

"No, no, Martha; I do not misjudge the heart you have given to me. I hope I appreciate the whole of your noble and truthful nature. Yet when I look back over the long history that till this day has been kept from you, and remember that you should have known it all, every syllable, long before you plighted me the richest of your affections, how can I help accusing myself, and most severely, too, for falling so far short of my duty?"

"You perplex me, Arthur," she returned, uneasily; "I can not think how any secret you have hitherto seen proper to keep from me, especially if it concerns yourself more than it does me, can operate to my harm."

"Perhaps it might, indirectly."

"Then pray tell me at once, and rid both of us of this suspense. What do you refer to, Arthur?"

"It is nothing less than the one great secret of my life. Unquestionably you have yourself suspected there was some strange way to my early days that you had not yet explored." You never heard me speak of my youth or of

my friends. Martha, I have had no friends. Since the day I was six years old I have been but the plaything of circumstances, tossed hither and thither as the winds of fortune veered and shifted, until I have finally thrown anchor in this quiet haven here.

"It is of my youth, my connections, my parents, I want to speak. You shall have the whole story in a few words, for it will only come down to the time when, a mere child, I was thrown on the world. Hear it now, Martha, and then tell me in all frankness if the discovery will in the least change your feelings toward me."

She looked a tender rebuke at him, but made no reply.

"To begin where I should, then," continued he, "and in fact where I shall only end—my father is *a criminal!* That was the sternest truth my mother's lips ever taught me! It sunk itself at once into my memory—nay, into my whole nature, and in a great degree shaped the course of my after-life.

"What my father's name was I do not remember, even if I was ever told. The crime he was guilty of was committed before I could well fix these things in my mind. I only knew what my mother chose to tell me; the rest is oblivion to me, the whole of it.

"The crime in question was forgery. My father had been in an excellent business, and was believed to be doing well. His friends gathered around him, and his friendships ripened into perpetual enjoyments. I was an only child. He had been married to my mother but a few years, and every thing was going on with abundant prospects of prosperity. He was contented in his occupation, and apparently blessed in his domestic relations. Things seemed to turn out, as he went along, about as he would have wished. All his acquaintance congratulated him on his apparent success.

"But there's no lane that is without a turning. From some unfortunate combination of circumstances, or from an unfortunate speculation that just at that crisis overwhelmed him, or some other cause that I may never have heard of, he found himself suddenly crippled in his resources, and obliged either to make a full surrender of his property for his creditor's benefit, or do something desperate to retrieve his fortunes.

"He chose the latter course, and committed forgery! Who the victim of his iniquity was I can not tell you. I never heard, and I am certain I never have sought to know since I came to years of maturer understanding. It has been a religious principle of my conduct since, never to re-open the heart of the calamity that at so tender an age fell on my mother and myself.

"I was told by my mother that he had his trial before a jury of his countrymen. Proof of his guilt was too glaringly plain to be questioned. The very instrument of his crime was produced in open court. Witnesses were ready to cut off all possible means of escape for him, and to hedge about him the snares that he had framed with his own reckless hand. He was convicted, and sentenced to seventeen years imprisonment at hard labor in the State Prison! And this man was my own father, Martha!—this guilty criminal!—this inmate of a prison-cell! Can you hear me thus quietly, when you know my name is surrounded with such associations?"

"Go on; pray go on," answered Martha, much moved by the unexpected narrative.

"Not long after his sentence, my mother determined on a step that she thought due both to herself and her offspring. She was fully resolved that neither herself, nor any living child of hers, should share the disgrace my father had brought upon his own head. I think her

sympathies for him must by this time have all died out, to enable her to adopt such a measure. Most wives might have sorrowed on to the end. But she did not do so; or if she did it was such a secret sorrow that none knew of its influence or existence.

"Her husband being already a convicted criminal, the law allowed her a divorce without any further trouble than the simple proof of this; which the record of the criminal court abundantly offered. The proof was produced, and the divorce granted.

"She told me of her having assumed her maiden name again, and that name she immediately bestowed upon me. In truth I have never known any other. Holliday will be my name while I live.

"It was hardly more than a year after this great event in her life that she sickened and died. Oh, I remember that sad experience but too well to this day! I can go back to the bedside of the only being I then loved, and see her pale face once more, and catch the sound of her low voice as she spoke words of such tenderness to me. I remember too well what a big sorrow swelled and burst in my little heart then, and how my eyes rained hot tears continually. I saw her hand grow thin and shadow-like, and her flesh waste slowly from her cheek. Oh, Martha, as I live, I do to this day believe that it was nothing but her hidden sorrow that was consuming her! I can now understand what I never thought of grasping and measuring then. I think I can appreciate, as I can hardly less than worship, the stern heroism with which she concealed her agony, and went about among her acquaintance with a placid countenance, while her side was pierced with cruel arrows. I could not see it then. Perhaps no one could see it then. But I can now.

“And my dear suffering mother died, bequeathing me to the world, and confidently hoping the bequest would not be flung scornfully away. My sun sank at once out of sight. The light of my heart went out in darkness. I was alone, and I stumbled slowly along, groping blindly on my passage. What my experiences have been since that time of early trial, what fortunes and misfortunes have kept me tossing here and there in the seething sea of the world, it would be uninteresting for me to relate; and it would all be of no profit even if I did.

“But this dark mystery that has thrown its long shadow over my whole life, and will shadow it to its very end—this I thought it imperative that you should know. I only upbraid myself for not telling you of it before, when you should certainly have known the whole of my history. It might have modified your feelings toward me—perhaps changed them entirely.”

“Arthur!” reprovingly exclaimed the girl, hurt at such a suspicion.

“Pardon me; I would not willingly wound you; rather would I inflict chastisement on my own self, for I know that I deserve it severely. But will you tell me, dear Martha, that you can reconcile yourself to an alliance for life with one who carries in his own blood the taint of a criminal? Can you continue to love me, nay, will you not rather feel inclined to scorn me, now that so humiliating a confession has been made to you?”

“Arthur, do you know my nature yet? You wrong me! You wrong me more than you can be aware!”

“Forgive me for it! Forgive me, I beg of you! In my own feeling of abasement I could not help forgetting what was due to another. If I could but be assured, Martha, that you love me in spite of all this!”

Hers was too noble a nature to be swayed by consid-

erations such as this. She had given her affections to him—not to the fortunate circumstances with which he promised to be surrounded, not to his friends, or to his family connections. But a single object filled her heart, and that object was himself. Come misfortune or come contumely, she could bear up bravely under it all, so she stood by the side of him.

That was an hour of new joy to the heart of the young author, in which he almost experienced the delight of the hour of his betrothal. He beheld traits in the character of Martha that he had never been able to detect before. She seemed to send out all about her an irradiating influence, that bespoke the exalted purity of her nature and the strength of its affections.

“But your father,” said she, after a pause; “has not the time expired during which he was to suffer imprisonment?”

“Yes,” answered Arthur, thoughtfully; “he ought to have been released last winter, if I have calculated rightly.”

It was surely a trying point to press, and Martha would not have troubled him, except for the activity of her own sympathies.

“And can not you discover him now? Have you never seen him since his release?”

“No,” was the answer.

And the conversation on that subject stopped there.

It was after tea on the same evening when Martha descried her father walking alone at his leisure down in the orchard; and she hurried off after him with a secret at her heart which she wished to communicate. He received her with his usual pleasant greeting, observing the smile that kept playing continually about her mouth.

"Now I have got at the heart of the mystery that troubled you so, father!"

He stopped short, and looked inquiringly into her face.

"What mystery, my daughter?"

"Oh, of Arthur's life. I know it all, now. I know the whole. He has told me."

"Well, and what is it?" His curiosity was not a little piqued at her manner, as well as with her words. "I always said, you recollect, that there was something out of the ordinary way locked up in his life; and it seems you have at last found it out!"

"Yes, father; he has this very day told me of it all."

"And pray what is it? Sit down here on this rock by the side of me, and tell me the whole of it. Am I not as interested as you, my daughter?"

So they seated themselves on a rock in the quiet orchard, and Martha went through the narration. Not a point that was given her was slighted or forgotten.

"Is it possible—is it possible that this is all so?" said Mr. Rivers, rising hastily to his feet on the conclusion of his daughter's narration.

She looked up into his face. It wore an expression of deep and powerful excitement.

"Why, father? Does it trouble you? Will it change your feelings toward Arthur?" She stood on her feet, too, and had laid her hand upon his arm. "Shall you wish that I had never seen him, father? Shall you want—"

"No, no; nothing of that, my child. It's nothing, now. I could not help my feelings very well, you know. But I have controlled them now."

This was all the answer she got from him. He instantly changed the topic, and drawing his daughter's

arm through his own they walked away in the direction of the house.

But the startled manner of her father troubled her still. It weighed more and more heavily on her heart. Was it possible that he could not call down a blessing on this proposed union now that he had unraveled the mystery of the young author's heart? It was this alone that troubled her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LIFE IN THE BALANCE.

As the public trial, so momentous an event to Mr. Dollar as well as to Duncan, drew near, the feeling of the community enlisted itself more and more intensely on behalf of each of the parties connected with the same, and watched for the approach of the day that should decide the prisoner's innocence or guilt, almost as eagerly as he did himself. People began to form themselves into parties in relation to the subject, espousing such a view as their instinctive feelings of sympathy or generosity naturally suggested. Some thought the youthful prisoner could be nothing less than a monster of brutality; and secretly congratulated themselves and the community that he was to be put at length beyond the possibility of further mischief and crime. Others again extended nothing toward his unhappy condition but the white arms of their tenderest compassion, and hoped that even if he were proved guilty—which could not be made out beyond every peradventure—he at least might be spared a cruel and ignominious death on the scaffold.

Mr. Dollar in no way relaxed his energetic efforts to procure the condemnation of his nephew, and his subsequent punishment. Intense grief had in a degree given way to intense hatred, and a burning desire for revenge. His ordinary powers of mind seemed to have been sud-

denly unseated, and their place usurped by the basest, the narrowest, and most groveling passions.

He had engaged one of the ablest advocates in capital trials that the whole city afforded, and enjoined it upon him over and over again to see to it that that this murderer of his son was not permitted to escape. Day after day he rushed breathlessly into the office of his lawyer; and again and again he would ask him if he felt perfectly certain of his ability to convict the prisoner.

"Recollect," he said, "that I employ you, sir, to assist the attorney for the State; but you shall so exert your great talents that you shall feel sure of obtaining a verdict for me, even if you had no such assistance! I want you to take the whole responsibility of my case upon your own shoulders; if you gain it for me you shall be paid whatever you desire, even if it is to the last dollar of my fortune!"

With almost every visit, too, he would go through a regular rehearsal of the several points of his story, seeming to fear lest something might be inadvertently overlooked and forgotten. All the probabilities and possibilities of the young man's innocence he stoutly argued down with his specious reasoning, battling with insane energy against the very slightest hope of his final acquittal, or even of the commutation of his sentence after it should be pronounced.

Ellen clung to the person and the fortunes of Duncan through the whole of these trying circumstances with heroic devotion. Each day she was regularly admitted to his cell, and passed the hours allowed her there in the sacred duty of comforting and strengthening his heart. Her purpose was simple and direct. The deep love she bore him—deeper now by far in the great gulf of misfortune into which he had been plunged—shone out in

her self-sacrificing conduct with all the radiance of a burning star. It could not but exalt its object, criminal as he might yet be believed, by reason of its own pure and ennobling attributes. She shrank from sharing no trial he was called to undergo. She made herself happy in helping to carry the overwhelming load he was ordered to sustain. At every turn of his lacerated feelings her own quick and warm sympathies met him, ready with their balm and oil to heal the wounds which she wept to see so cruelly inflicted.

Further than this, she joined with him in writing most consoling and encouraging words to Alice, entreating her to remain in quiet where she was, and directing her heart to the only source of strength and sustenance on which they could all confidently rely. "Alice, dear Alice," she would write, "only be calm. Do not come to be a witness yourself of our mutual affliction and suffering, but pray for us both in the solitude of your own little chamber, and hold fast to your living belief in your dear brother's innocence. God will never let the guilty go nor the innocent suffer. This is what feeds my heart and makes me stronger than even our accusers!"

Ellen's fortune, too, was freely put to the service of him she loved so devotedly, and the ablest counsel she could command for his defense were immediately called to the task. Besides this, the former employers of Duncan had lost none of their old confidence in his integrity, and believed not less at this time in his innocence than they did in the wicked and selfish character of his accuser. And they left no stone unturned by means of which his acquittal might be fairly secured.

The day of the trial came on. It was in early fall, the pleasantest of all the seasons in the year. As he was conducted from his place of confinement to the court-room,

he could not refrain from casting his eye upward into the grand autumnal sky, and his soul fervently thanked God for the supreme love of beauty that was still left him. His vision took one broad sweep across the sunlit heavens, and a thousand secret influences, that made him resolute and strong, stole into his heart. He walked with a firm step up the stone stairs that led to the court-room, neither trembling, nor halting, nor betraying any confusion of feeling. He felt armor-proof against the boldest charges, no matter whence they came, nor however strongly they might be supported. As he reached the dock and took his seat, he felt rather than saw the influence of the gaze that was directed upon him; and while it had not the power to unnerve or unduly abash him, it did work to give a calm and strong serenity to his demeanor, and caused the very placidity of his countenance to radiate nothing but an atmosphere of unsullied innocence.

The judge was soon in his seat. The lawyers were at their places within the crescent-shaped bar, their books and writing materials spread around them over its covering of faded green baize. The officer called the assembly to order, and duly proceeded to open the court after the legal form. The case was called. Forthwith began the work of impanneling a jury, who were taken one by one from the mass of the bystanders. Duncan was reminded of his liberty to challenge peremptorily a certain number of those called, but he seemed too indifferent to exercise it, and could see no advantage in doing so, even if he had been in the least inclined that way.

The attorney for the State opened the case for the prosecution, and in his overweening zeal to add another wreath to his own reputation by the sacrifice even of a fellow-creature's life, who might, too, be quite as guiltless of

the crime as himself, for aught he really knew, he went far out of his ordinary course, and left the level ground of plain statements and reasonable propositions for the higher land and the more exhilarating air of appeals to the feelings of the jury.

He proposed to prove in the course of this trial, that for a long time previous to the commission of the murder, a bitter feud had existed between the victim and the prisoner; that in addition to this fact, the prisoner had had violent words with the father of the murdered man, which were the cause of his being turned summarily out of doors, and of his making savage threats of revenge against both Mr. Dollar and his family; that on the particular night when the young man lost his life, the prisoner was seen in the near vicinity of the spot where the deed was committed, with a heavy cane in his hand; that, furthermore, he was seen in conversation with the deceased; and that that conversation was loud, and angry, and of a violent and threatening character; that the two parties were not seen to separate; and that the body of the murdered man was at length discovered not a great ways distant from this locality; from all which the inference was irrefutable that he, and he alone, could be the author of the crime.

That was the statement of the case in its distinct outlines. Of course there were innumerable other minute points and shades of testimony, that were made to support and strengthen this carefully constructed framework, and to fill in compactly the crevices that so general a statement must have left open. Not a particle of evidence that could by distortion or false coloring be made to bear against the prisoner, was suffered to go unimproved. The attorney for the State manifestly meant to make the most of every thing he could lay his hands or

his suspicions upon. Instead of standing up for the holy and righteous claims of Justice, he rather seemed to be mad with the same insane desire to convict the prisoner at any and at all hazards, that spurred on Mr. Dollar himself with such a fearful energy.

Duncan glanced with a look of mild sadness over the faces of the throng, as this summary was rehearsed against him, and his eyes lighted on those of Ellen! She had followed him even there. Crowds, and illy-ventilated rooms, and the rude gaze of a multitude—compassionate, it might be, in its very rudeness—had no effect to break down the strength of the devotion that was able to carry her through all—yea, to the verge of the very worst and darkest probability. There she sat; her eyes fixed closely upon the face of the prisoner; surrounding him with the cloud of her ever-moving, ever-living sympathies; and trying as best she could to strengthen his soul with the silent magnetism of her serene expression and her calm smile. He caught the meaning of her look—of her unutterable smile, radiating joy to his heart from her own, and in an instant his nature rose superior to all the trials of the hour—rose above, far above all thoughts of other men's judgment, and all fears of their vindictiveness; and he answered her smile with one that broke out like a bright halo over his face, and for the moment gave him the aspect of a strong and noble martyr.

One by one the witnesses were called by the government, and questioned as to their knowledge of such facts as went to substantiate the charge against the prisoner. They gave their answers clearly and with distinctness, from which the acute and sometimes protracted cross-examination of the opposite counsel could not succeed in swerving them a syllable. Each witness knew just so much, and could testify to it; and their united testimony,

it was calculated, if put together by the skillful ingenuity of the counsel for prosecution, would make a net-work of guilt apparent around the person of the prisoner, through which not even the most learned and adroit lawyers could assist him to escape. Certainly—it was frankly confessed—certainly this would be a clear case of circumstantial evidence; but the circumstances were so strong against the prisoner—made up as they were of his open hatred of his victim; of his defiant language to his father, and his subsequent threats of vengeance against his family, and of many other particles of proof that could readily be turned to good account by the prosecution—that he could be convicted as easily and as fairly upon the strength of them alone as he could by proof direct, positive, and undeniable.

I do not wish to repeat the long and wearying progress of the day's trial, going through the examination of the several witnesses in their turn, and dwelling with a minuteness that could not fail to be tedious to the reader, upon the shades and lights that checkered the case from beginning to end; it will be enough to narrate the impressive event of its termination, and leave the rest for the reader's warmer sympathies and deeper compassion.

The eminent gentleman whose services Mr. Dollar had secured in connection with those of the attorney for the State, made an effort on this occasion which was spoken of as being beyond any in which during all his professional career he had hitherto succeeded. The three hours' speech he had addressed to the jury was confessed to be a master-piece of forensic skill and burning eloquence. At once he was pathetic and impassioned. He stirred to tears by his tender appeals, or he aroused to indignation by his earnest tones and his thundering declamation. But no part of his address so manifestly touched the

hearts of jury, judge, and spectators—nay, of the prisoner at the bar himself—as the sad and desolate picture he drew of the bereft father's hearth-stone: robbed in a moment of all its light and joy; buried in a cloud of darkness that in this life would never be lifted again; strewn recklessly and cruelly with the white ashes of a complete devastation; the pleasant old fires all burned out forever; the laughter dead and frozen; and gloom pressing down upon the wretched parent's heart, till it must press him finally with its great weight into his lonely grave! Few eyes were dry when this appeal was made with such success to their sympathies. Its influence could scarce be less than controlling upon the verdict about to be rendered.

But one of the two lawyers for the defense attempted an open advocacy of the prisoner's cause before the jury-men, the other having confined himself to the management of the case during the course of the witnesses' examination. There was no evidence to be produced in his behalf, the labor of his counsel being confined to the rigid cross-examination of the witnesses on the other side. As their testimony could be but triflingly shaken, the counsel who stood up for Duncan before the jury, had little or nothing to oppose to these circumstantial proofs, and this plausible presumption to his client's guilt, save the unaided efforts of his own talents and energy.

When his turn came to speak, it was already the second day of the trial. He entered upon his labor with little of the exhilaration and positive courage that betoken a good cause, but felt obliged repeatedly to spur on his energies to an effort he could not all the while help thinking to be only mechanical. Of course his intellectual strength imperceptibly oozed away, and he sat down at last, confident that he had not, and could not, help the

cause of the unfortunate prisoner at all. Others saw it, too; and the influence of the fact reached the minds of the jury—a body whose intellects are very often set first in motion by their feelings, and whose opinions strengthen with the positiveness of their prejudices. The attorney for the State summed up, claiming to have made out all that he proposed at the outset, and calling on the twelve men who sat before him to convict the prisoner without hesitation of the crime with which he stood charged.

It was late in that afternoon in autumn when he closed. It was still later when the judge finished his charge, and the jury retired for consultation. The minute they were gone the throng of spectators began a general buzz of conversation, and many left the stifled room for a breath of fresh air.

There sat Ellen—the heroine—the devoted lover—the stern believer in the word of him to whom her heart had been given—watching every change in the proceedings with an intensely eager interest, and throwing rapid glances of encouragement to the young prisoner in the dock. Her face was deathly pallid, and her lips showed only white lines. There was at times a wildness in her stare, as her eyes turned from the judge to the lawyers, and from the lawyers to the face of Duncan; but it came and went with almost the rapidity of thought, stamping none of its impulses on her otherwise composed features.

Duncan was calm—oh, how calm! His soul had braced itself with one great effort against the very worst that could come. He had fixed his resolution, and it was founded in nothing but the firm conviction of his guiltlessness. That resolution was to endure without a complaint or a murmur, to the bitter, bitter end.

The lamps were lighted, and the room again showed signs of a fresh excitement. People looked eagerly in

the direction of the jury-room. Already the door was slowly opening. The intelligence was rapidly telegraphed from one to another—from the court-room to the hall and the stairs leading out of doors—and again the people came pouring into the place. The sheriff preceded twelve solemn-faced men, clearing a way for them through the throng. Every eye was bent upon those ominous faces, and every one was studying closely the probable verdict in their dumb expressions.

They filed off slowly into their seats. The room already was full, and could hold no more. Bar, and recesses, and windows, were all packed with the living mass. They swarmed like insects about the crowds that blocked and blackened the outer doors, eager to hear, if they were not permitted to see. Every voice was hushed. Even breathing seemed for the moment suspended. You could have heard the buzz of a gauze-winged insect in the reign of that cavernous and gloomy silence. The lamps themselves seemed to burn but dimly, as if they would not shed their light over a scene so full of dreary wretchedness.

"Prisoner at the bar," called out the official; "stand up!"

Duncan rose to his feet, erect and self-possessed. All eyes turned to him.

"Hold up your right hand!"

He did as he was bidden.

"What say you, gentlemen of the jury—is the prisoner at the bar guilty, or not guilty?"

"Guilty!"

It fell on every ear, low and sadly as that word was spoken by the jurymen, like the sound of doom. The crowd fetched one long, deep breath. It was a relief to know even the worst. Duncan sat down and bowed his

head to the rail before him. Ellen fell prostrate upon the floor.

There was great confusion in a moment. A passage was cleared, and stout arms bore the insensible girl out into the air. She was placed in an adjoining room, and the windows opened that the cool night wind might draw in over her face. Restoratives were hurriedly brought, and applied with unremitting attention. They chafed her hands, her wrists, and her temples. And when life at length came back again, and the colorless lips of the poor sufferer found language into which to shape her groans—"Oh, Duncan! poor, dear Duncan!" was all that could be heard.

She opened her eyes, and saw a strange face bending down tenderly over her own. "Be quiet, child!" said the stranger.

It was Kate Trott! She had heard, and seen, and felt it all!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE WORK OF A MAGDALEN.

A FEW weeks went by ; weeks of patient suffering to the hearts of both Ellen and the condemned prisoner, each one shortening the little span the law yet allowed him to live. Every day Ellen passed several hours in Duncan's gloomy cell, and lighted up the gloom with the irradiating proof of her devotedness.

A loud, rapid, and nervous ring was heard one evening at the door of Ellen's residence, that started up the maid-servant in alarm. She thought pretty active arms must be in operation outside.

Taking another with her, she hastened to answer the summons.

They saw only a woman standing on the steps. She was dressed in faded clothes, with a limp and crushed bonnet set on somewhat awry, and presented altogether a picture calculated to challenge both ridicule and pity. Her countenance, coarse as its expression might properly have been thought, still bore manifest traces of sadness, if not of undying sorrow. The ludicrous was so overshadowed with the pitiful and the suffering that if one had been inclined to smile, he must likewise have wept at the same time.

Over her thin shoulders she had thrown a shawl that she suffered to fall away from one of them and draggle behind her. In her face were the distinct lines of vice

and dissipation. She had a look, too, that was anxious and care-worn. Raising her shawl mechanically from the step, she accosted the servants, who evidently were about to shut the door in her face.

"Stop! stop!" she cried, with a quick gesture. "I've come for something that's important! very important!"

The servant who held the door half hesitated, so much was she impressed with the stranger's manner.

Seeing that she had gained this much, and a little in doubt whether she would be able peaceably to gain any more, she threw herself bodily into the open crevice, exclaiming as she did so—

"Now go for your mistress! Do ye hear? your mistress! Be very quick, for there's no time to be lost! Call her here now! Do ye hear?"

Still both servants stood firmly opposing her further entrance into the hall.

"Who are you?" one of them called out, in increasing alarm. "What do you want here? What do you want?"

"I tell you I want to see your mistress!"

"But you can't; you can't! Go out doors with you! I shall call for help! Go back down the steps!" and both girls pressed with all their might against the door.

Making a powerful effort, however, in which soul and body appeared to have collected all their forces together, she pushed herself fairly by her opposers, and stood in a menacing attitude, breathless and excited, beneath the hall-lamp.

"Now tell me if this ain't where Miss Worthington lives," said she, imperatively.

"Well, suppose 'tis; it's no place for such as you, and you'd better march yourself off down the steps as quick as you come in."

"I sha'n't leave this house till I see Miss Worthington!" said the woman; and she folded her arms with an impulse that evinced only the most obstinate resolution.

"You won't see her!" as resolutely replied the girl who helped in this angry conversation; "and the sooner you take your baggage out of this house the better it may be for you!"

As she uttered these words, she stepped near the woman, and laid her hand upon her shoulder, as if she were about to venture upon the threatened process of ejection without further ceremony.

In a twinkling the stranger twisted herself away from her grasp, and stood looking defiance at her opponents, with her arms folded still tighter about her person.

"I shall call the police, then," said the girl. "Help! help!"

The second servant likewise echoed the call.

Immediately a door was opened, and Ellen Worthington herself came hurrying into the hall.

"What is the meaning of this?" she asked them. "What is the matter here?"

"This horrible creature won't go out," answered one of the servants. "She rushed in past us both, spite of all we could do to keep her back; and now she says she won't stir a step till she sees you."

"Sees me!" exclaimed Ellen, in a voice that had lost none of its soft melancholy since the great troubles of her heart began. "What does she want to see me for?"

As she spoke, she advanced a few paces nearer the woman, and recognized her countenance. Pallor quickly overspread her face. She had seen that strange pair of eyes before. She well remembered all the circumstances.

The face was the same that was bending over her own,

when she first opened her eyes after her fainting-fit in the court-room! The stranger was Kate Trotter.

"I want to see you, my good lady," went on the wretched creature, "and nobody but you! I've put it off, and put it off, till I can't do it no longer! It weighs down too heavy on my heart! Oh, when I see what you suffered in that court-room, my conscience reproached me so bitterly! I can't sleep, dear lady, till I get this matter off my mind! I must tell you the whole! You must know it!"

Ellen was deeply interested in the earnestness of the stranger's manner, and for a single moment hesitated.

"Let me free my mind to-night," added the woman, "and it'll be all over with! Don't put me off! It'll make you as happy as 't will my own wretched self!"

"Follow me, then," said Ellen, turning to lead the way into a little sitting-room, where her talk could not easily be overheard. And the woman walked on after her.

"If this is the way such kind of folks get treated here," grumbled one of the servants, "it's no place for the like of us. It's high time we were quit of the premises!"

"Now what have you come to tell me?" asked Ellen, as soon as they were seated in the inner room.

"I'm to be certain that you are Miss Worthington," answered the woman.

"I am that person," said Ellen.

"What I'm a-going to say to you, my dear young lady," began she, dropping her voice till it sounded ominous and sepulchral, "you may depend on for nothing but the sacred truth. It's all true, if it's the last thing I ever speak!"

Ellen grew deeply attentive, and studied her visitor's working features with aroused excitement and curiosity

"To come right to it, then : it's all about that—that bloody murder! about nothing but *that murder!*"

"What about it? What do you know?" quickly interrupted Ellen, her face reddening with the blood that rushed rapidly over its surface.

"Don't hurry me, or I can't tell any thing. Only let me take my own time. It's been such a dreadful secret to keep, I hav'n't known hardly how to keep it as long as I have. I 'most wonder I hav'n't been crazy, and then told it all before I knew what I was about."

She stopped, seeming to collect herself before she attempted to go on. .

"What I've got to tell you, dear lady, and what I've come a-purpose to tell you before I slept this night, is what jest only one other livin' bein' besides myself knows. If 'twas one of them little secrets that could be kept, I never should tell it in the world. If I had n't seen already with my own eyes how wretched it has made you, and what a wretched creetur it was goin' to make you all the rest o' your days, I never sh'd betray it to a livin' soul. But I can't stand this. I'd die my own self before I'd make such misery for another, and such a dear, innocent one, too!"

A second time she paused, and then resumed,

"Miss Worthington," said she, in a tone hardly above a whisper, "I know all about this murder!"

Ellen started. Now her face was white as marble. She glared upon her visitor, as if with a single look she would read the very secrets of her soul.

"I know, dear lady, what you don't know. Duncan Morrow—oh, you love him to distraction yet, I know—he ain't the guilty man!"

"I knew it! I knew it!" cried Ellen. "Oh, that it could only be proved! Help me prove his innocence,

woman, and all the money you ask for shall be yours! Duncan, I knew you told me the truth when you said you were not guilty of this dreadful crime!"

"Yes, he did tell you the truth, as I happen to know; and what is more, I can prove it for you both!"

Ellen got up and seized her visitor impulsively by both hands, while she looked beseechingly in her face.

"Any thing—any thing is yours, woman, if you will only make your words good! Speak! speak quick! tell me the whole of what you know!"

Nothing could surpass the poor girl's excitement, when she discovered thus unexpectedly that there was yet a chance to save the life of her lover.

"How do you know that Duncan did n't do this deed? Do you know, then, who did? Can you tell that? Can you clear him by what you have to tell? Speak, woman! There is no time to be lost! Come—Duncan not guilty! I knew it was so! I believed all the time it was so! Do you know who is the guilty one, then?"

"Yes, I know who he is," answered the woman, with an effort that seemed to prostrate her energies.

"Who? Then who? Oh, do not keep me in this terrible suspense! Take this dreadful load from my heart this very night!"

The woman hesitated. Her thoughts did not rebel against her purpose, but they were seething in the deep caldron of her passions. Old feelings—such as lay nearest her polluted heart, and had long warmed her into what enjoyment that heart was familiar with—were secretly trying to assert their strange control again. She could not, in a single moment, throw off what to her were the only endeared memories of years. But though she was staggering already in the conflict, she broke through their chains at last, and with a convulsive effort her soul gave up its secret to the world.

"I'll tell you who did it!" cried she, in a tone of real agony. "It was Isaac Crankey!—him that I've known well for years! There, now, I've told it all, and it can't be unsaid again! Let the innocent go free, and let the guilty suffer! I wash my hands of blood. Isaac did the deed, and not the dear young man you love so well!"

As she spoke these words of such fearful meaning, she bent down her head in her lap, burying her face in her hands. No human being could understand the violence or the pain of that struggle with her heart, that had at last resulted in this important confession.

"Will you swear before a magistrate to what you have told me?" asked Ellen, seizing her frenziedly by the arm. "Will you do it this very night?"

"Yes, yes, yes! Oh, any thing, every thing, but this heavy load on my heart! He has done it, and he must bear it! He told me what he was going to do before it happened: he was going to put Duncan Morrow out o' the way because the other one wanted him to; but he made a mistake—and the very one that planned the wicked crime was the one to suffer from it all! Oh, but God's hand is in it! I can see that! How could I keep such a secret, when I knew that the Almighty himself had determined it should come out as clear as the noon-day! Oh, Isaac! Isaac! But the guilt is n't on me!"

And she wept and sobbed till the apartment was filled with the echoes of her distress.

And was there no Providence in this event?—that he who had first designed the crime should himself be its victim? And no punishment, either, for the father who could plot so nefariously with a creature that he ought rather to have raised from degradation by his example?

Let the thoughtful answer.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE HANGMAN'S ROPE.

DUNCAN was speedily released by due process of law ; Isaac Crankey was tried and sentenced to be hung.

When the murderer saw that the whole truth was opened to the light, he admitted his guilt, and explained how it was that he mistook the one young man for the other. He did not mean to kill young Henry Dollar, he said ; and therefore thought he should not be punished as for willful murder. But the law said, No. Murder was in his heart when he struck the fatal blow ; in his mad haste he had only mistaken his victim !

Old Mr. Dollar, fearfully stricken with the events of the last few weeks, still trembled every hour the real murderer was suffered to live, lest he might, in an unguarded moment, give to the world his own connection with the affair. But the event showed that he knew not the nature of even Isaac Crankey ; a being who, with all his crimes heavy on his soul, still could keep honor unsullied, and still could preserve one side of his manhood far more sacredly than he.

No ; Isaac thought, and thought truly, that Mr. Dollar already had cause enough for repentance in the terribly unfortunate issue of his own plan. It was unnecessary that he should now add exposure to all the rest ; for the dreadful secret was a far acuter agony for him to endure

than all the cruel inflictions with which the laws might visit him. And Jacob Dollar lived on; with this secret all the time gnawing and festering in his bosom; his heart slowly breaking with the sorrow that no power could assuage on this side the grave!

Time went rapidly on. The unhappy prisoner counted the days, and then the hours. It was already midnight, just before the fatal morning that would usher in the day of execution.

The condemned man still sat on the side of his bed in the little cell, trying to shape and comprehend in some degree the palpable reality that was around him. He seemed unable to altogether understand his situation, let him try ever so seriously. His thoughts were wandering and bewildered—quite broken up by the recoil of the evil powers that had brought him to his present condition.

Even at that hour a clergyman was in his cell, talking to him in a subdued voice, and laboring to smooth the descent for him to the grave. Alternately he prayed for the wretched prisoner and offered him what consolation lay in his power. The poor man could hardly convince himself that he deserved the summary punishment of a murderer, for the blow that he dealt was not meant for his victim, but for another.

"Well, if I'm to die," said he, after a protracted fit of sullen musing, "I must see Kate once more. But is it so certain that I am to die? I can't believe it myself. It don't seem at all like it to me. I can't say as I feel any different now from what I generally do."

He was leaning his head on his hand, and thoughtfully gazing upon one particular spot in the floor. Such a besotted, inhuman, vice-seared expression as his countenance bore, it would be difficult to find any where else, even in the field in which he had been so long a laborer. His

hair was tangled and matted, brushed helter-skelter about his protuberant temples, and extremely coarse and wiry. In places it was already turning gray.

Every time he looked up, which he did only with deliberateness and with a stupid and sullen stare, his great eyes showed themselves swollen and bleared, as if they, too, had assumed an unnatural expression. Now he gazed at the clergyman present, now about the walls of his dreary cell, and then asked vacantly if any body could tell him where he really was.

No wonder that he was lost in the winding mazes of his crimes at last.

His spiritual adviser took such occasions to try and impress on him the fearfulness of his situation, and the necessity of making the best account of every moment that remained.

The clock struck. One!

"To-day!" said he, looking up suddenly.

"Yes, to-day," solemnly answered the clergyman.

"Can you realize how short your time is?"

"Then I'm to be hung, am I?" continued the condemned man, not heeding him. "Hung! ha—ha—ha!"

And then followed a brief space of thoughtfulness again, during which he might have been trying again to take into his mind the meaning of his doom.

"Before all those people!" he exclaimed. "But won't it be glorious? To think how grandly I shall go off, and all their eyes fixed on nobody but me! Ah! Isaac Crankey 'll be in his element to-day, if he never was before! To hang a man right up, now, by nothing at all but his neck, between earth and heaven, without a single thing for him to rest even the tips of his toes on, and that cursed cord drawing tighter and tighter with your weight, and closer and closer—choke—choke! Ugh!

how can I think of it without shaking! It don't please me one bit! I really wonder how I shall feel, though!"

With this his own suggestion, he proceeded to clasp both his great bony hands about his neck, pressing them more and more tightly together, as if he had put his neck, for the sake of experiment, in a vice. The trial must in some measure have satisfied his curiosity, for he immediately relapsed into his former fit of thoughtfulness, as if he might have possibly comprehended the dread nature of the punishment he was so soon to suffer.

"But I must see Kate again," he repeated to those around him. "Kate has been a good friend to me, from the time I first knew her. Misfortune made us friends in the first place, and we've been attached by that bond ever since. Never in the world did she tell on me before, and she never 'd done it now, only 'twas too great a secret for her woman's heart to keep. That was jest the whole of 't. I had n't ought to have expected she would, either. But there's no help now for it. I've got to suffer; and there's where this matter'll end! Tell Kate I must see her, will you? I would n't fail to, for the world. I've got somewhat to say to her!"

They assured him that she should be brought into his cell as soon as was proper in the morning, and that he should be allowed at that time to take his leave of her.

"And after that," replied he, "never—never shall I see her again! Is that really so? Well, poor Kate! at least you'll remember me! I never thought 't would come quite to this, though I really could n't say for certain that 't would n't! But what's the good of cryin' about it now? What's past, is past. Let it all alone. There's no help for it, is there? It was only one blow with this right arm, and 't was all done. There was n't

any sufferin', nor any groanin', 'The life went out as quiet as it first come in!"

He paused again.

"Hang me by the neck! Will they do that? Can they do that? Take a man in full health, put an ugly rope about his neck, and choke him to death! Oh, what will be the good of it all! Will it do me any good? Will it help any body else? Will it make a single soul a whit happier? Or carry any more sin out of the world? Or prevent any more from comin' in? Oh, God!—that I should ever come to it! To choke—to choke—to choke, with a rope!"

His anticipated physical sufferings seemed to have the most terror for him. His mind was apparently busy with nothing but these.

Later than this, he managed to fall into a slumber. It was at best but a restless sleep, and could have brought him very little refreshment. He awoke from it at length, to make the discovery that he was in his cell all alone.

"To-day!" was his first exclamation; and in an instant he sprang up, and sat upright on the side of his bed.

Such a swift tide of strange feelings as rushed violently around his heart! Such acute anguish as that imbruted heart for at least one brief moment suffered! Such a mighty sweep of strong sensations over his brain—blinding, and bewildering, and overwhelming—it is only for those in like situations to experience ever!

"Then I'm really going to-day, am I?" he repeated slowly to himself, his voice sounding sepulchral in the little cell. "I declare it does n't seem so to me! I can't help feeling I'm a goin' to live as long as other people—forever perhaps—oh, I don't know what! God help me! —my head!—my heart! Oh, how faint I am! How

close it is here!—Is it only this morning? Has it at last come? I—die—on—the—gal-lows!”

Just at this juncture, he was interrupted in this fearful train of musings by the entrance of the prison-keeper, who came to bring him in his breakfast. Much more than his ordinary allowance was offered him on this morning, and possibly some kind heart had provided a better quality than usual, too. He turned round and surveyed his meal, as it was placed upon the table.

“What’s the use?” said he, after a moment’s thought. “I can’t eat. Let her go at that. I shall have to die pretty soon; so what’s the good of’t all?”

The keeper tried to soothe his feelings, urging him to refresh himself with food, as it would give him more strength to go through the trying scenes of the day. And after a little, the prisoner finally did set up at the table, and before he thought of it had made quite a hearty meal.

An hour later, the clergyman who had hitherto attended him came in again; but this time he brought another with him. It was Kate, the wretched outcast who had betrayed him to the world.

“Oh, Isaac!” she cried out, the moment she laid her eyes on his face, while she groveled on her very knees before him, “oh, forgive me this once, Isaac! I could n’t help it, you know! I really could n’t help it! You should n’t have told me such a secret! You should have kept it all to yourself! It was too much for such as me to keep! And when I saw that innocent young man in the dock, whose life was saved from your hand, in danger of losin’ it after all jest by my own wicked silence, how could I keep your secret, Isaac? How could I? And that dear young lady, too, that loved him as she loved her own soul, and weepin’ and moanin’ day after day

over his fate—when all the time I knew, and you knew, that he was so innocent—oh, how could I stand by and not try what I could do to save her! It was n't through any hate I had for you, Isaac; no—no—no! But it was for the pity I could n't help feelin' for them that was a-goin' to suffer, when I knew they was n't guilty! Oh, but you should n't have told me the secret! You should have kept it all to yourself! You should have known I could n't keep it! No, Isaac, you could n't always keep it yourself! 'T would some day or other have come out! And why not now, as well as years hence—before any more wrong's done to them that's innocent of the whole of it? You must forgive me, Isaac! I know you will forgive me! Won't you, Isaac? Won't you say that you will, before I get up off the floor here?"

There stood now the stolid-looking prisoner in the middle of the floor, folding his stout arms across his chest. He appeared perfectly unmoved and immovable. His breathing, to be sure, was deep, and sometimes irregular; but that was the only betrayal he made of the least feeling or emotion.

It was a moving scene, the meeting of these two vice-hardened, sin-stained beings; two who had lived together in comparative harmony so many years; whose love for one another was as exalted and as undoubted as it is possible for that of such persons ever to be, and who still, in the very face of the wide breach so suddenly made in their sympathies, secretly clung to one another with a spirit of devotion that was little short of tenderness itself.

She made another effort; this time embracing his feet with her arms, and raining her tears plentifully on the floor. Her hair fell down from its fastenings, and hung disheveled over her face and shoulders. Bitterly enough did she bewail the necessity that drove her to the con

fession she had made; but with all the earnest tenderness she could throw into her manner, she begged to know how she could stand by in silence and see the innocent ones suffer. She wept because he had not taken the advice she had at first given him, and kept himself free from this crime altogether. She bewailed the terrible fate that that very day awaited him, but besought him to go to his end with a clean heart and with ill-will toward no living man. And to close her appeal, she begged for his forgiveness again for what she had been instrumental in bringing about; for nothing but his forgiveness, as he hoped himself to be finally forgiven.

It would be needless to attempt to convey any idea of the intensity of her manner, or the beseeching piteousness of her voice, or the great cloud of sorrow that shadowed her countenance as she went on with her petition. This, she said, was her last and only remaining supplication. Upon his granting her this single request hung all the peace that in this world she could ever hope to enjoy.

A long time it was that she strove so earnestly with his heart. She kept importuning him most beseechingly every moment. She seemed intent on finally extorting his free forgiveness from him, or going to the gallows with him herself!

He remained in his statue-like attitude as long as he could. Obstinacy could hardly hold out any longer. It must have been a heart of real stone that could be indifferent to such earnest appeals.

At length his chest shook and heaved irregularly. Little by little it grew convulsive. As she sobbed, so he seemed to sob likewise. His figure slowly bent, like a giant tree bowing before a high wind. His muscles all gradually relaxed. And with one deep-drawn, groaning

sigh, that made hot tears well their way up from his very heart, he sprang forward, and lifted her to her feet.

"I *do* forgive you, Kate!" he cried, his voice tremulous with emotion. "I do forgive you all!"

She threw herself instantly upon his breast, and there she wept a long, long time.

"There's a bunch of papers," said he, recalling every item that he wished now to intrust her with after his death—"you'll find a little bunch of papers that belong to me in that chest of mine; it's in the left-hand corner, clear at the bottom. Keep them all carefully. They'll be of consequence yet to somebody, perhaps. You'll find my marriage-certificate among them, too. Ah, but a bad man I've been, Kate, and this is the end of a bad life! I should have loved my wife and child better, and worked for their comfort in the world; but I did n't, and see where I am to-day! You'll not forget the papers, Kate?"

She promised him they should be carefully preserved. And with a sorrowful leave-taking, indeed, she took her departure from his sight.

* * * * *

Close by the prison-wall, in the adjoining yard, already towered the gloomy gallows. The sun shone out brightly, and the ominous structure threw down a long, dreary shadow on the ground. It seemed as if the shadow made the instrument of death look still more repulsive and hideous.

Persons—those who were particularly privileged on that day—were already flocking in, crowding all along the passages, in the angles and corners every where. There was hardly a standing-place that was not occupied to the full extent of its capacity. Every face was shadowed with a degree of anxiety that gave the cramped

premises an appearance at once dull, dark, and spectral. The very sunlight was toned down to a sad and sickly brilliancy, making it gloomier even than if it had not shone at all.

The people watched and waited patiently. One asked another if he had seen the man when he received his sentence, and how he seemed to bear it. Another inquired if the culprit would be likely to go through the trying scene like a man; and if he had a hardened look, or appeared to be at all timid in the face of his fate.

Some seemed solemnly occupied with such thoughts as were begotten of the scene; but these were few and isolated instances. Most were conversing freely with one another, and at times quite cheerfully. All speculated upon the probable manner in which the doomed man would die; and there were not a few in the world who would willingly have laid wagers, this way or that, on the courage or want of it that he would at the last moment exhibit.

At length a low buzz began near the door of the prison, at which the criminal was expected to come out from the inner apartment. Then the buzz broke and spread into a murmur, that ran sullenly along the packed mass of human beings.

A procession came slowly through the door, and filed sadly along in the direction of the gallows past the crowd. All faces were eagerly thrust forward from outstretched necks to catch a glimpse of the prisoner.

He was clad in a white robe, in accordance with an old custom, that hung loosely about his limbs, and walked to his doom by the side of the clergyman who had been his constant attendant from the day of his sentence. The sheriff led the van, supported on either side by a deputy. Only he and the prisoner and the clergyman mounted the scaffold stairs, the prisoner between the other two. Even

at this last moment he seemed to step firmly as he went up, without a shudder, and with not the least betrayal of fear. He must now have given up hope, and nerved himself for his final struggle.

Why need I go through the rehearsal of a scene, the like of which is almost any week in the year to be witnessed over the broad face of our land? Why relate those few and halting last words of the dying man?—the last prayer, falling so solemnly on the hearts of those who listened and witnessed?—the sight of mental agony—of bodily suffering?

The deeply-moved mass of people suddenly stood silent, as if judgment were that moment passed not only upon a poor guilty wretch, but likewise upon them. On a single object all eyes were intently fixed. It was the swinging body of the criminal, whose struggles and whose crimes were in this world forever at an end. Some fetched deep sighs unconsciously. Some turned away their faces; and sickened at the revolting and inhuman spectacle.

He died as all such die. His fearful end read no lesson to those who were allowed to witness it, save, perhaps, one of stunning, paralyzing awe. It deadened the heart, and unconsciously besotted its finer feelings. Out of it sprang as fruit no pure, lofty lesson of right, no impressive idea of justice or of the beauty of well-doing—that is the growth only of love.

Isaac Crankey could plot crime no more. His busy brain was asleep. His hand was stretched stiff at his side, never, never to move itself again.

But Jacob Dollar—was he any easier, now that he knew the criminal and his dreaded secret had perished forever?

Could you have asked the heart of the man, dear reader, what, think you, would have been its answer?

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A HAPPY MARRIAGE.

BEAUTIFUL and bright above all the days in the autumn of that year was the day of the marriage of Ellen Worthington and Duncan Morrow. It was the intention of both to have the ceremony as privately conducted as possible, yet that determination was hardly sufficient to keep away from the joyful scene many who still loved the bride tenderly.

The sun seemed to salute the earth with a holy kiss that morning, and the air blew as blandly up the town streets as it blows over the gardens of Italy. The select bridal party were already gathered at Ellen's residence, exchanging congratulations with one another on the pleasant event about to follow.

Within, the scene was highly animating. The delightful morning sun, streaming into the opened rooms through the looped drapery of the windows, gilded every object on which it fell, and kindled spontaneously feelings of secret joy in every heart there. A morning sun is always pleasant; but such a sun, when beaming brightly on a bridal scene, and the two about to be united just emerged from the very darkness of desolation, too, is the giver of a glory that shines from the rays of scarcely any other.

All who were present felt that the dark cloud had been lifted now: Its incubus was removed from their hearts.

Only bright sunlight was over them and around them. It had finally chased all the shadows away.

Ellen came into the presence of her friends, fondly leaning on the arm of him she loved above all others. She wore a serene smile for every one, which she generously bestowed upon them all as she entered; and it quite perceptibly gladdened her heart to feel that it was returned with such a frank and ready cordiality.

She was dressed without any art—unless perfect simplicity may be called art—her hair tastefully parted over her forehead, with a single orange blossom for its only ornament—her person attired in a neat traveling habit, to be all ready for the little tour they contemplated starting on immediately—and her face glowingly alive to the influences of the morning and the hour. Her appearance instantly suggested grace, and refined intelligence, and true womanly dignity.

And to have seen the face of the youthful bridegroom at her side, would have been to disbelieve that he could be the same one who, not long ago, had sat sadly in the prisoner's dock, listening in silence to the wickedly woven story of his own guilt; the same who had afterward stood up and heard, with unchanging countenance, the verdict that sought to destroy his life at a single cruel blow, and whose pale features betrayed the hidden anguish that might even before that time have consumed him.

He stood erect, wearing the impress of a noble manliness. The sufferings he had recently endured served to develop more noticeably those traits that ennobled his character, and that had drawn to him first the sympathy and then the admiration of all who knew him. In truth, at this moment he really stood on higher, prouder ground than before the mischance that for a time threatened to overwhelm him with ruin.

They plighted their vows solemnly before the clergyman, and in the presence of that little assembly. They received the good man's blessing on their heads, trusting hopefully in the still unexplored future. They would be faithful now, forever. No change might overtake and surprise them in the hereafter—no differences could creep in between heart and heart—no fears were to let themselves down like dark clouds about their rosy horizon. It would with them always be the glorious sunshine, of which the golden sunshine of this happy morning was but a faint and fading promise.

After receiving the oft-repeated congratulations of their friends, and reciprocating each kindly-expressed wish with all the fervor of their feelings, they partook of the refreshments that were provided, and took their leave. Ellen had left her own home; but no wanderer ever went toward home any happier.

For nearly a week the newly-married couple were engaged in traveling among the beautiful scenery our land offers on every side. They steamed up the lordly Hudson, and looked down upon its silvery surface from the lofty heights of the Catskills. They sailed the quiet length of sweet Lake George, and dreamed pleasant dreams together among the scores of little islands that emboss its bosom. They caught the roar of "the sounding water" at Ticonderoga, and rambled among the ruins where a brave soul sent its imperious summons to a terrified enemy. And down the St. Lawrence; and through the gateway of the hills of Vermont; and by the banks of winding rivers, skirting their lengthening streams for hundreds of miles; and into calm and pleasant villages, whose streets were flaming with the autumnal fires among the maples, and walnuts, and elms: until at last they reached that delightful old spot, doubly dear to both of

them now, Draggledew Plain. Old Hector Hedge was, as usual, standing in the tavern-door holding on by the lintels as they drove by. And not very long after the little town knew that Duncan Morrow and his bride had arrived. It was great news there.

They drew up before the door of the little nest where the dumb girl lived with her protectress. Duncan jumped to the ground, and helped his bride out after him.

Alice was at the window when they drove up. The moment she saw her brother's form, she ran out through the door in the wildest delight, and clasped him tenderly about his neck. Oh, what would she not at that moment have given could she express to her brother the tumultuous emotions that moved her so deeply ! What joy would hers have been could her tongue have been that moment loosed and her ears unstopped ! She laid her head on his breast, and glittering tears rolled down her cheeks. They were tears of pure thankfulness and delight.

At length Duncan roused her ; and, taking her hand, placed it in that of his beautiful bride. Alice looked at her a moment through the mists that swam in her eyes, an instantly an expression of recognition broke out over her countenance. She remembered that face ; she well remembered the visit Ellen had made before to her home ; but how could she have suspected then that the stranger was so soon afterward to come there as her brother's bride !

As soon as the excitement of arrival was a little past, Duncan proposed to Ellen that they should all three walk over and see her friends, the Riverses. This was early the next morning. So they made ready, and after a pleasant excursion found themselves at the gate of Mr. Rivers's little elysium.

The two sisters welcomed their old friend with a most

earnest cordiality. The recollection of the great trials through which she had just passed quickened their friendly sympathies for her immeasurably, and they seemed to receive her almost as one who had been raised from the dead. They all shed tears of joy together, and their embraces and congratulations were really affecting.

Ellen presented them to her husband. It must be confessed that she did so with not a little degree of sensible pride and satisfaction. The girls had known him before, but only through his sister. He took the opportunity, moreover, to thank them for their friendly interest in his unfortunate relative, and for the tender sympathy they had extended her when her heart was nearly broken with its grief.

And Alice stood and looked alternately at the face of her brother and his bride, with an expression of the deepest delight. Her own face was eloquent. The speech that Heaven had wisely forbidden to her lips, seemed breaking out in lines of living light all over her fine countenance, till the intelligent and radiant glow of her features gave her an appearance that was hardly less than ethereal.

Days went by with them, and all were superlatively happy. The dark stream of their troubles had been crossed in safety. The cloud that so long and so threateningly had hung over them had all blown away from their sky, and the sun now shone out more brightly than before. Ellen's preference was to remain in the quiet of the village for some time yet; and, of course, nothing could have given either her husband or her friends any greater satisfaction than such intelligence.

Mr. Holliday had frequently met the new party at the house of Mr. Rivers, since their arrival, at which time

Martha could hardly help envying the newly-married pair their happiness; while she wondered also, how soon she might realize the whole of her own dearest dreams. And Mr. Rivers himself, when he could gather them all together in his little parlor, seemed more vivacious than he had been since his removal into rustic retirement. A new activity had infused itself into his spirits; and he certainly appeared as happy as the happiest, the bride and groom even not being excepted.

Things had gone along in this smooth way for a little time, when he suddenly conceived the plan of absenting himself from home for a few days, giving out that he was compelled to go into town on business of an important character. It was rare that he went into town, since his leaving it with his family, and such were occasions only of great importance to his own affairs.

On the fourth day of his absence, Duncan and his bride and Alice, and Mr. Holliday, were all assembled at the house of the girls, where they were engaged in what, in rural expression, is termed "passing the afternoon." They were in high spirits, every one of them. Alice, too, as the varying expressions of her face sufficiently betrayed. Arthur had already conceived a strong attachment for Duncan Morrow, and discovered qualities of a most lofty and sterling character in him. It seemed, in truth, the pleasantest of all the meetings they had yet had together.

They were discussing quite animatedly among themselves the project of making an excursion into the woods for nuts on the morrow, and dwelling with peculiar delight on the beautiful landscapes that at this season of the year are unrolled to the eye of the true lover of nature—when the gate very unexpectedly opened from the road, and two men walked toward the piazza.

"There's father!" exclaimed Martha, at once.

"Yes, and a man with him!" added her sister Mary.
"Who is it?"

Both the girls scanned the stranger with an earnest gaze, and finally Martha ran to meet her father at the door. She received his kiss with great pleasure; but the moment she fixed her eyes on the stranger's face her own countenance turned very pale.

"Come, go in again, Matty," said her father, leading her gently back by the hand. "I shall be with you there in a few minutes."

And the girl returned to her friends, though with a more thoughtful look on her face than when she went out.

Presently Mr. Rivers entered the room, and spoke to them all. The stranger still followed him closely, and waited in silence till he had addressed the whole of the little company; though it was certainly observable that his eyes did fasten themselves eagerly upon the two young men present, whose countenances for a moment he appeared to be studying with intense anxiety.

Martha and Mary both caught the look of that strange man, and in an instant recognized it as one they had seen but a very little time ago. It was the old book-peddler, who had so abruptly left them when their father appeared to him across the piazza! And now their father brought this same man home with him! What a strange inconsistency! There must be a mystery locked up in the matter somewhere!

They did not fail to observe that he was better dressed than before, and that that despairing look of sadness, once brooding all the while over his face, was now relieved in some measure by a gentle smile. It gave him quite a new aspect in their eyes, if it did not really change his character.

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"Mr. Holliday," said Mr. Rivers, advancing toward the young author in the presence of them all, "I had determined that this should be a new day in your life. I have learned your secret that you have hitherto concealed from every one so religiously, and endeavored to make the very best use of my knowledge. Others have suffered as well as yourself. Let this day put an end to all unhappiness. This stranger, whom I have brought home with me is your father! Surely you ought to know one another again!"

"Arthur! Dear Arthur!" sobbed the old man, clasping his son in his opened arms. "Can you forget and forgive the wrong I have done you?" and he laid his gray head on the young man's shoulder, and wept like a child. The young author's amazement, and the astonishment of the sisters, can only be imagined by the reader.

Not then was the story all told, nor the mystery wholly made plain; yet it was explained at last. It was this: that Mr. Brindall—an assumed name—had for seventeen years suffered the legal punishment of his crime, and was now but a few months released from prison. His sad and trying experience, first as an apple-dealer, and then as a traveling book-merchant, the reader has already had.

But there was still another fact connected with his crime. Mr. Rivers himself was the merchant whose name he had forged, and who was now the first, after the seamstress Fanny Ware, to overlook his fault and restore him to his only living relation! And yet again the old man was doubly surprised to find not only that he was freely forgiven, but that his son was to marry the daughter of the very man he had so wronged!

CHAPTER XL.

GOOD FANNY WARE.

ARTHUR HOLLIDAY had recently published his second book, and it was a success.

Authors are now and then fortunate, even if their efforts as a general thing make no very important impression. They may be obscure enough for years, and even their best friends be unaware of their existence; yet occasionally, in more frequent instances now than used to be the case, one of them reaches the finer fibers of the public heart, and straightway he becomes a marked candidate for the generous reception of dollars, and sympathy, and fame.

Arthur, just at this critical time, happened to be one of the fortunate ones. He had written a book that came over the reading world with delight. It seized hold strongly on their deeper sympathies—those that underlie all the common characteristics of men—and carried them completely away on its rapidly running current.

His publishers wrote him a formal letter of congratulation on his success—a habit, by-the-by, that very few publishers with any visible signs of wisdom-teeth are addicted to—and extended to him, unsolicited, better terms for his services in the future.—Another contradiction of the wisdom-teeth theory.

Readers bought his work eagerly, and devoured it

with avidity. Critics alluded to it in highly flattering terms, which fact, inasmuch as he had published anonymously, gave the toiling and hopeful young author a great deal of encouragement. Large editions were run rapidly through the press, and copies ordered on all sides by dealers, long before it was possible to get them ready for delivery.

"Ah," said Arthur to himself, as he sat alone in his quiet little study, and contemplated these unexpected fruits of his labor, "but I may hope! I may still hope! That, at least, is something!"

And indeed it was something. It is a great deal, to any youthful aspirant who perseveringly unites industrious labor with a fervent and ennobled ambition. It is the bread that sustains him by the way. It is the staff he may confidently lean upon, as he climbs so patiently up the rugged sides of the hill.

The father of Arthur had, at the son's urgent desire, taken up his abode in the little house with him, where his mind seemed gradually settling down into a state of repose and enviable contentment. He busied himself indoors and out, and helped his son build up plans and lay out prospects for the future. The heavy burden of his troubles he seemed to be slowly unpacking from his shoulders, and not the most distant allusion was ever made by any one of those in the secret, to the story of his former crime and punishment. Poor man! he had dearly atoned for all the wrong he had ever done.

One wedding in a neighborhood usually begets another. The example that was so perpetually set by the daily presence and companionship of Duncan and Ellen, operated with a wonderfully magnetic power on two other hearts.

Prospects were bright even to brilliancy. Every thing

looked well at present. The broad future smiled, and offered its largess already spread out in its lap. Why wait for a more favorable time? Why hope for one more prosperous?

Mr. Rivers's little rooms, therefore, were filled, on the pleasant morning that witnessed the marriage of Arthur and Martha; and of all who had been asked to join the little assembly, none could be supposed to be any happier than the young bride. It was not her lot to be taken, like many other brides, far away from home; she was not trembling, even while she was forced to confess her happiness, because she must leave the best and dearest of friends behind; it was not a bridal like an April day, half smiles and half tears; it produced for her nothing but undivided delight, and filled her heart only with joy.

Arthur's father was there, and he looked round on the scene with eyes that kept filling with tears. It was with him an excess of pleasure; something so far beyond what he had ever expected to witness, while he himself was a participator in it all.

And of course Duncan and his bride were there, with showers of affectionate wishes for those whose union they had come to witness. And so was Alice, her sweet face radiant with an expression that never leaped from tongue, nor lingered on lips. And so was good Mrs. Polly too, alive with her sympathies, watching all the proceedings of the occasion with attentive eyes, and fondly believing she had more cause for gratitude than them all; in the thought that Alice, at least, was not going to leave her.

It was a pleasant wedding, as such generally are, and passed off to the satisfaction of the several parties concerned. Martha soon went to live with her husband at the little cottage in the bushes, where she expected to pass a winter as she had never passed one yet. Mary

was close by her. Her father, too, was right at hand. Her dear old friend, Ellen, had concluded to close her house in town, and spend the whole winter in the same box with Alice and Mrs. Polly; and no news could have been pleasanter than that. Martha felt that she had abundant cause for congratulating herself on the pleasant prospects that opened before her.

Some few weeks after this event in the quiet annals of the village of Draggledew Plain, Arthur and his father set out together for the city. As soon as their journey was completed, and before stopping any where to take refreshments, they hastened to Mr. Brindall's late abode. He opened the door himself, leading his son up the back stairs that commanded such a view of the huddled little area. Fanny sprang from her chair, uttering a cry of joy.

"Why, father!" she exclaimed, seizing his hand with both her own. But the instant she saw that a stranger was with him, and a young man, too, her manner lost very much of its intensity, though none of its frank affectionateness, and a deep color stole to her face.

"Fanny," said the father, "this is a bright day for me, and for us all. This is my son, Fanny."

She greeted the young author modestly, yet heartily, and then begged both of them to seat themselves. She was in a maze of perplexity already, from only the few words Mr. Brindall had spoken.

The father began then, and opened to the generous-hearted girl the secret that, since her acquaintance with him, had been the canker of his happiness. He told her frankly of his crime, committed years ago, and of the weary days and nights of his atonement for it; of his accidentally carrying books to sell to the house of the very man whom he had wronged, and of there falling in with his own son, although then totally unknown to him as

such; of the generous forgiveness of Mr. Rivers, and finally of the happy marriage of his daughter to his child; "to my child, Fanny," said he; "only think of the Providence there is in it!"

Fanny's surprise knew no limits. She only looked it from her eyes; she could not utter it in words.

"And now," began Arthur, "I must tell you, in the first place, that I have come to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generous sympathy for my unfortunate father. But for you, my dear girl, I knew not what might have resulted to him from his unhappy state of mind. Neither of us can thank you sufficiently."

"No, indeed; no, indeed!" interrupted the old man, in a trembling voice that was full of emotion.

"We at least are going to try to show you our gratitude," continued Arthur.

"Oh, sir!" modestly protested Fanny, "it was nothing for me to do! Any body else would have done the same thing!"

"But it seems that no one else offered to do the same thing, and you must therefore ever remain dear to our hearts. I have a proposal to make to you. You must be obliged to work very hard here, and can not more than secure a living at that. I am permitted, through my wife, to offer you a pleasant home in the family of her mother, and I am likewise desired to urge you to accept it. If you do, be assured that you will confer lasting pleasure on the hearts of more than ourselves here."

"I don't know," hesitated the girl, stammering and blushing with the confusion that had suddenly overtaken her.

"Ah, but we want to know," said Arthur; "and I can't bear to think of your disappointing us."

"No, Fanny," added his father. "No; don't disappoint us. You must go!"

He succeeded in getting her to follow him into the room just across the narrow entry—his own room formerly—where he detained her alone for a long time. Arthur could hear distinctly the words of his father, as he earnestly plead with her on the matter; but the girl said little that was audible.

Mr. Brindall—we shall still call him by his assumed name to our story's end—came back at length, and his eyes were read, as if he had been weeping. His face looked flushed and much excited.

Then Fanny herself came in, and took two or three idle turns across the floor, as if she saw some thing that dreadfully needed "putting to rights" in a further corner; and smoothed out the spread on the little table with the palm of her hand.

"You're going, I hope, are you not?" persisted Arthur, for he was fully determined not to be put off.

"Well," faltered Fanny, turning round and holding on by the table, "I don't know. I ought n't to; but I suppose I must."

"Yes, you must! you must!" the young man broke forth, with much earnestness.

"So you must!" echoed his father, rubbing his hands.

"If I can only hope to make others happy about me!" said Fanny, a mist swimming in her bright and beautiful eyes.

"Then if that is the only condition," said both father and son together, "the matter is settled!"

And Fanny Ware left her dismal rooms that looked out only on that dreary area, and went to live as one of the family at the more pleasant house of Mr. Rivers, in the country.

The poor seamstress had cast her bread upon the waters, in befriending the wretched man who had looked in vain into other human faces for sympathy; and now, after not many days either, it had returned to her again abundantly.

CHAPTER XLI.

OLD NATHAN GRUBB AND HIS ERRAND.

IF my good reader has n't already forgotten that there ever was such a character, and if moreover, he can with a little effort recall the fact that an old man who rejoiced in that name was an inmate of the poor-house at Epping at the time of the death of Gabriel's mother, I should be happy to call his attention to the same individual once more.

Soon after the murder of Henry Dollar, and the subsequent arrest and trial of Duncan Morrow, together with the part Ellen so bravely enacted on his behalf, the intelligence of these things reached Epping. Such news always travels more swiftly than any other ; and it is apt, too, to penetrate into corners and out-of-the-way spots, where better intelligence might never think of going.

The very day Nathan Grubb heard the name of Miss Worthington mentioned in connection with that of the suspected criminal, he set his wits busily at work to learn if certain conjectures that floated dizzily in his brain could be supposed to have any definite meaning. What those conjectures were, the reader will directly know for himself.

He studied and puzzled for days. Several times he was surprised by some brother pauper at his old chest—he called it his “chist”—overhauling musty and rusty

papers, tying them very carefully up, and then hiding them away again. While he was engaged about his little errands in the barn, or the field close by the house, or the garden, he was seen quite often to pause with his hoe in his hand, to tip up his hat, and shake his old head very ominously. Oftentimes, too, he was overheard in an interesting conversation with nobody but himself, in the natural course of which many inquiries of a secret character were sagely put, and by the same lips, with a knowing shake of the head, as sagely answered.

He was troubled about something; that was plain enough.

All at once he disappeared. No rocket, all ablaze, ever went out in blank darkness any more suddenly than old Nathan Grubb went away from the Epping poor-house. Mr. Harcastle was at a sore loss to understand what it could mean; and Mrs. Harcastle only said she was "glad on it," and she wished "from her soul, that all the poor wretches would take it into their heads to go off together, and so make one job on 't!"

Mr. Grubb, too, went away in the night. That alone gave the deed a character of mystery. And starting in the night as he did, when the sun rose the next morning he had gone quite a piece on toward the smokes and din of the great city. Gabriel was there; at least so he suspected, for he had long ago heard of the sudden leave he took of Mr. Nubbles and his family, and he thought of no other place to which such poor waifs of fortune ever go. And full of faith on this important point, he walked on.

His first object was, to find the orphan. The plans he had laid with such care and exactness in the silence of the old country poor-house, he found quite driven from his head in the sudden noise, and clatter, and rush, that dis-

tracted him in the city. He discovered that it would require some considerable time in the outset, to get something like a comprehensive idea of his work, and of the locality in which it lay.

But fortune rather took him under her protection, and he began to feel as if his labor might not prove altogether fruitless. By accident or good luck, he pitched his tent and made his headquarters exactly in the purlieus where Gabriel and little Jane, and a regiment of little castaways beside, were hived. Day after day he sauntered among them all, yet no Gabriel had he seen yet. He almost felt tempted, before he got through, to give it over altogether. Then he thought of the results that hung on his perseverance, and his energy instantly renewed itself. The trial for the murder of Henry Dollar, too, was progressing at the same time; and that kept his thoughts more active than ever, especially as Miss Worthington's name was daily mentioned every where in connection with it.

Duncan had been liberated, however, and Isaac Crankey had already swung for his crimes before old Nathan Grubb had made any perceptible progress.

One day he passed a little ragged urchin in the narrow street, and turned around mechanically, according to his custom, to read his countenance. This time he paused longer, and looked closer than ever. The boy himself looked up in return, rather puzzled to know what such an unusual inspection might mean.

"Gabriel! is that you?" said old Mr. Grubb, staring at him fixedly.

The child gave him an instant look of recognition, and held out his hand to be taken by his old friend of the Epping poor-house.

"Now how come you here? Where 've you been all

this time, I want to know? Who brought you here? Tell me all about it, Gabriel! You don't know how much I've worried for you, ever since you run away from Mr. Nubbles's!"

So, as they walked slowly along, Gabriel went through with a straightforward narrative of his progress to, and life in the town.

"But do you like this as well as you did at Mr. Nubbles's?" asked his friend Nathan, very compassionately; for none are more compassionate than the very poor.

"Yes," said Gabriel; "I like any thing better than living there!"

"Or than the old poor-house?"

Gabriel hesitated. All the old memories swept over his heart.

"But you're dreadful poor! How lean you look! Where do you live? Who takes care of you?"

"I did live with Isaac Crankey; he was the man that first got me away from Mr. Nubbles. But he's dead now. He's the man they've just hung!"

Old Nathan started in affright. "Is that so, Gabriel? And you've been livin' all this time with that wicked murderer!"

Yes it was really so. This was but a single one of the many strange things the world sees every day.

"And who have you lived with since he was put into prison, then?"

"With Kate Trott. She was an old friend of his; and she's adopted me for her own child."

Nathan Grubb continued to walk on, still leading the orphan by the hand. He grew silent and deeply thoughtful. Few words were spoken now, and even the occasional questions of Gabriel were unanswered.

Finally the old man stopped short.

"Now I want you to tell me, Gabriel," said he, "as you would answer to a dear old friend of your mother as well as yourself, do you like to stay where you are?"

The boy looked down at the ground.

"No, you don't! I see you don't! Well, jest see here, now! Shouldn't you a good deal rather go and live somewhere else, in some pleasant place, than stay where you are?"

"With you, Mr. Grubb?" he innocently asked, looking up quickly in his face.

"With me? Well, we'd see about it. But at any rate, with somebody that 'd be as kind to you as any little body like yourself could wish. Shouldn't you rather go, than stay where you are?"

"I don't like staying here," answered Gabriel. "It's a bad place. There's bad people all round. I remember what my mother said to me before she died, and then I think what sort of a life I am living here; and it makes me very sad. I wish I could go somewhere else, Mr. Grubb, where better people are. I do indeed!"

"Then you shall, dear boy!" said the old man, with a very fervent emphasis.

And that same day they bade a final adieu to the quarter that had detained Gabriel so long, and took their departure for scenes and persons more in sympathy with the wants and wishes of his heart. Mr. Grubb would not hear to such a thing as going back to Kate Trott's to get what few clothes the boy might have, but persisted in getting out of town as fast as he could.

But before he really shook off the dust of his worthy feet, he wandered just at dusk to a house about which he had already walked many times. It was a handsome residence, and situated in a most respectable quarter of the city. After reaching the steps with Gabriel, he pro-

ceeded to lead him up. The boy was bewildered, and silently wondered what it meant.

Nathan rang the bell, and inquired if Miss Worthington lived there. "Yes, she did." Was she at home? "No, she was n't," with a long stare at himself and his youthful companion. Could he ask where she was? "Yes, she had just got married, and was then on her wedding-tour. She would n't be back home in some time."

The old man held up his disengaged hand in surprise. He began to think his plans were baffled at almost every turn.

Would the girl please to tell him who she married?—If it was Mr. Morrow? "It was Mr. Morrow;" and he would be likely to visit his native village with his bride, before their return.

Instantly the right idea found its way into Mr. Grubb's brain; and thanking the servant for her kindness, he walked with increased briskness down the flight of steps, still holding on by Gabriel's hand. He seemed determined at least not to lose him.

Although night was upon them, the old man did not think it advisable to remain longer in the city; so he began a sort of forced march with his little companion, steering his course direct toward the open country.

It happened to be a moonlit night, clear and beautiful. Every object was penciled in a distinct outline upon the ground, and the light of the moon was white as silver. The few trees along the streets threw down the slender network of their leaves and sprays on the pavements, making almost fairy grottoes among the shadows through which they walked. The youthful imagination of the boy was kindled with every thing that he saw.

They passed the limits of town life, and emerged upon long roads, narrow and dreary, skirted by few houses, and those far apart, and more and more hidden in the leaves. The sight of them, sleeping so soundly in the shadows, while the white moon shone so pleasantly over every thing else, tended rather to infuse a spirit of melancholy into the boy's heart, and carried his thoughts vaguely back to mother, home, the blessed country, and a host of objects of which he might never before have practically known. So dimly are our real thoughts sometimes seen in the sheen of the moonlight. So like long-forgotten dreams, dance old memories and fancies intermingled, through the shimmering network of the moonbeams.

All night long they traveled on ; and though Gabriel grew weary before the morning dawned dull and gray in the east, yet he made no complaint. Old Nathan now and then asked him if he was tired, but he bravely turned it off with an answer of apparent unconcern.

They stopped and got a frugal meal in the morning at a quiet farm-house, and begged for permission to sit and rest themselves awhile in the kitchen, which was granted them. Gabriel very soon fell asleep in his chair, where he continued sleeping till he was awakened again by his companion. "I might let you sleep till night," said Nathan, "but it's better not to, here. We ought to be goin'." And bidding their kind hostess good-morning, they struck off into the road again.

All day they traveled on, sometimes managing to catch a ride on a cart, occasionally stopping in some sheltered spot by the road-side to rest their weary limbs, and begging what food they wanted as they went along. Tired as the orphan was, he was not so tired that he could not

enjoy most deeply this new sense of freedom. Oh, how his heart expanded, as he looked over the broad landscapes, and felt that among such as these he might hope to spend all his days—away from crime, away from wicked people, in the lap of bountiful and beautiful Nature! If he had any one secret wish connected with the city on which he had turned his back, it was that he might never, never behold its stony streets, or its people, again!

For four successive days they kept on their way, managing about their rest and refreshment as they had begun. The people were every where kind, and seemed to feel a strong sympathy for their condition. No door was ever coldly shut against them, and no hand refused them of such as it had to give.

It was rather early on the morning of the fifth day after their departure from the city, when they arrived at Draggledew Plain. This was the focus of all old Nathan's hopes and plans. They had already begged a breakfast a mile or two back, and Nathan said he felt fresh and ready for his work. As yet he had not told Gabriel the plan he had been nursing in his mind, but the boy was made to believe that his kind old friend was going to take him into the country somewhere, and provide him with a permanent and happy home. The orphan's limbs were swollen, and somewhat stiff, from the severe cold he had taken in the rain; but he made no complaint. The heart had courage to support both itself and the body then.

Just as they reached the gate of the little cottage where Alice Morrow lived, Nathan stopped. "I'm goin' in here," said he; and the boy followed him up to the door. He knocked, and Duncan himself made his appearance.

"I want to see her that was Miss Worthington," said Nathan, very earnestly. "I've come a great ways, and I must see her this morning!"

Duncan bestowed on himself and his traveling companion a searching look.

"You can see her, I suppose," he replied; "come in with me."

The man and the boy had been seated but a moment when Ellen came in. Nathan rose from his chair, and, still holding his hat in his hand, told his errand:

"You are Miss Worthington that was, I s'pose?—Yes? well, I've studied this many and many a day for months, to find ye."

"Me!" exclaimed the bride.

"Yes, you."

Duncan waited to know why, no less than his young wife.

"Wait a minnit," said the old man, "and I'll tell ye. It's jest here, now. Last winter, in the very dead o' winter, this little boy's mother died in the old poor-house over to Epping. I was livin' there myself at the time; and I s'pose I live there now, that is, when I'm to home. On her dyin' bed, that boy's mother begged me to take care of him. I promised her as well as I could; but what could I do?—I, a pauper! Well, and she give me a couple of letters that had been written to her years and years before, when she was nothin' but a girl unmarried—that had been written to her by a sister o' hers. She said that them letters might be useful sometime in helpin' the dear boy along through the world, and keepin' him out o' sufferin'. And I've got 'em yet. I always kept 'em as sacred as any treasure.

"The Selectmen of the town o' Epping thought 'twas

best to bind the boy out to service; and so they did. They put him out to Mr. Nubbles—a man that lives somewhere round here on a place they call Worrywitch Hill; and I should n't wonder myself if 't was a worrywitch sort of a spot, indeed! He staid there awhile, and then he went away; he'll tell you himself sometime, perhaps, what he went away for, and who he went with, and all about it. At all events, I went off to the city, determined to hunt him up. I'd made his mother a solemn promise, and I felt as if I was bound by it to the end. As good luck would have it, too, I found him in the street, not but a few days ago; and we've walked from that time to this, till we're right before you here!"

Ellen could hardly repress an exclamation of surprise, that one who was so young and looked so frail, should be exposed to the fatigue of so long a journey on foot.

"Now I want you to read them letters, marm, if you've a mind to," and he proceeded to draw them from the depths of a pocket somewhere about his old coat, and to deliver them into her hand.

Ellen took them, and read them attentively. The old man watched her countenance eagerly during the perusal. Alternately her face was burning with color, and pale with surprise. She extended both hands, and exclaimed in a voice of excitement—

"Why, these letters were written by my own mother!"

"Yes," added Nathan, bowing, "and to her own and only sister!"

"Gabriel? Is this Gabriel?" asked Ellen, advancing toward him hurriedly.

"That's Gabriel," said Nathan. "His mother went by the name of Mrs. Vane, while she lived over at Epping poor-house; but that never was her name. Her married

name was Rössiter. That was her husband's name, she told me."

"Yes, yes; I've heard my mother say that! I've heard the whole story long ago, but never knew what had become of my poor aunt. And so she died in the poor house! And this is my own cousin!—the only relation I have left!" and she put her hands affectionately on Gabriel's head, and assured him that he should want home and friends no more:

"Who was he living with, when you found him in the city?" asked Duncan, interested deeply in this unexpected discovery.

"He had been living with Isaac Crankey, sir, he said; but since he—he died, a woman he called Kate Trott took him in her charge."

Duncan turned pale as death. He looked round upon Ellen, and she was trembling in every limb.

So very, very close had been their connection with this murderer!

Arrangements were at once made to give little Gabriel a quiet home with Mrs. Polly; and his old friend Nathan was provided for, too, with all thoughtfulness beneath the same roof. It would have been hardly fair to separate them now. In the pleasant village of Draggledew Plain, therefore, so near the scenes of his earlier and bitter experiences, he dwelt among kindred and friends, in whose sympathies he might find sustenance for his own as long as he lived. His had been a blasted life till now: henceforth it was to start forward with a new vigor, and blossom with the many promises of a rich fruitage, as the days of manhood cast their long shadows before him.

There are but one or two other personages of whom

we wish to speak, and that very briefly—and our story is told.

The Nubbles family went down hill at a galloping pace. Mr. Nubbles drank with his friend Jo Rummins pretty nearly all the time. So that it was not a great while before the former managed to invite a visit from that terrible disease, known as the *delirium tremens*, which carried him off in a tempest of madness and terror too dreadful to be described; and the latter, hearing the sad news, fell shortly after into a state of hypochondria, from which he obtained relief at last only by suspending himself by his neck from the ceiling of his desolate kitchen, where he was found by the villagers not until several days afterward. To this day they shun his house as a pestilence; and little children as they go by on the still road, shudder at the tale that was told them, and hurry on as if afraid still of seeing his ghostly face peering at them through the windows.

As for Mrs. Nubbles, and Kit, nothing was left them but the poor-house. And to the poor-house they went; the same spot from which, but so short a time before, little Gabriel went forth in tears, as the apprentice-boy of the husband and father! A strange mutation, but not less just than strange!

Mr. Dollar's heart gave him no rest. Duncan and Alice were greatly surprised, one day, to receive a communication from his own hand, in which he set forth that he had fully restored to them the amount of their claim, interest included, and hoped that they would be happy the rest of their lives. For himself, he said that he could find peace nowhere again but in the grave. He desired that they should never attempt to approach him, for thenceforward he resolved to be known of no living person.

And accordingly he took up his weary walk through the world as a wanderer, and is to this day trying in vain to hurry away from the thoughts that, like vague and bodiless phantoms, rise up behind him on his path, and will rise up, till he has purged his heart forever of their awful presence.

The world will offer him now its pity; but for all that, he can never cease to be his own persistent and inexorable accuser!

THE END

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